A Gentle Knight of Old Brandenburg

Charles Major

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"Within three days you will be glad enough to choose"

A Gentle Knight of Old Brandenburg

By CHARLES MAJOR

Author of "When Knighthood Was in Flower," "Dorothy Vernon," etc.

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TO MY WIFE

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A GENTLE KNIGHT OF OLD BRANDENBURG

CHAPTER I

A WORD ABOUT PRINCESSES

To a great majority of persons having the good fortune to possess an imagination, princesses as a class are exceedingly attractive.

Long ago, kings and princes were found to be of the earth very earthy, and the fact that the clay of which they are made is nothing better than what in the human pottery might be called "Common Adam Yellow" has become so well known that romance and male royalty have grown to be things apart, even to the imaginative mind.

But the princess has always been treated with such unmitigated cruelty and has been so universally the victim of royal caprice, a mere article of barter and sale, that her sweet clay has become soft and white on the potter's wheel, and she has taken her place in the great throbbing heart of the world, to be cherished with a romantic love that goes out to no one else. A

cursory glance through history will readily convince one that it is better to be born a beggar whose fate is to die of want than to come into the world a princess who will one day die a queen. The head that wears a crown knows nothing of uneasiness compared with the head that lies beside it.

The only compensation the princess receives for her hard fate lies in the fact that her praises are often oversung. For example, she is always beautiful—no one ever heard of a princess who was not—usually gentle and wise. The chroniclers assert her beauty with so great insistence that frequently we are led to suspect these old scriveners of protesting too much. But despite our scepticism, we are forced at times to believe all they say.

Wilhelmina, sister of Frederick the Great, was one against whom our doubts cannot prevail. The evidence in her favor is overwhelming, and we must believe that she was not only beautiful, but wise, learned and witty, gentle, tender, lovable and true. Voltaire was her friend, and probably she was the one person of whom that interesting old cynic wrote nothing but good. Guy Dickens, Frederick the Great and a score of others render the same verdict and we must accept it.

Wilhelmina, too, wrote a great deal about herself, and left us one of the most interesting books ever published. From it this story is taken. The princess does not say she is beautiful, for modesty shows its sweet face in and between all the lines of her fascinating memoir, but she proves conclusively her learning, her wisdom and her virtues.

Of all the princesses ever sung in verse or chronicle, this rare Wilhelmina suffered most during a tedious time from man's selfishness and cruelty.

Carlyle says of her: "Never in any romance or stage play was young lady, without blame, without furtherance and without hinderance of her own, so tormented about a settlement in life —passive she all the while, mere clay in the hands of the potter, and begging the universe to have the extreme goodness only to leave her alone."

To those who have read Wilhelmina's memoir or Carlyle's history of Frederick the Great, it will be needless to suggest that certain seemingly improbable incidents in the following story are true.

To those who do not happen to be intimately acquainted with the wonderful story of this beautiful girl's life, it may not be amiss to say

that all the characters here introduced lived and acted the parts assigned to them.

In many instances it has been necessary to tone down scenes to avoid, if possible, extreme melodrama, since nothing in a work of fiction is so apt to provoke doubt as a startling truth.

King Frederick William's apparent hatred of his son, Prince Fritz, afterwards Frederick the Great; the grotesque antics of the Tobacco Parliament, worthy to rank with the veriest farce ever played on any stage; the scenes at table where the royal family had nothing but cabbage for dinner; the king's cruelty to his daughter Wilhelmina, and the frightful methods employed to compel her to accept the man chosen for her husband; Grumkow's satanic part in all the terrible proceedings; the peculiar combination of state reasons that brought Wilhelmina, her sister Charlotte—nicknamed Don't Care—and the handsome Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth into relations so curious that they seem improbable; the magnanimity and the bravery of the rare, gentle Margrave of Schwedt; and the romantic events preceding Wilhelmina's marriage occurred with few exceptions substantially as described.

In passing judgment on Adolph, the Margrave of Schwedt, it must not be forgotten that

in the middle eighteenth century drunkenness among both men and women was the rule rather than the exception. Sobriety was looked upon as one of the weaker virtues and of itself brought no respect to one practicing it, though joined with other virtues it was not considered objectionable.

To cover the whole ground of Wilhelmina's life, even during the short period embraced in this story, would require a large volume in the telling; therefore what follows is but a fragment of her history, a page across which walks one of the few unselfish persons with whom she came in contact, the gentle, the magnanimous, the grotesque Margrave of Schwedt.

CHAPTER II

AMONG BRIGANDS

On a certain stormy March day in the year 1731, the good old Margrave of Bayreuth and his son Frederick Henry, the Hereditary Prince, were sitting before the broad fireplace in the little mountain-bounded, snow-covered castle of Bayreuth, discussing the interesting subject of marriage and giving in marriage.

Although neither the prince nor his father had ever seen the fair Princess Wilhelmina of Prussia and Brandenburg, nor had dreamed that she could ever become even an incident in their lives, her name sprang to their lips with a persistency that now, in the light of subsequent events, seems to have been almost prophetic.

Outside the grim little castle the mountains were clothed in snow and ice, and the wind howled among the tiny peaks. The mountains were little more than mimic mountains, as Bayreuth was a mimic principality and its ruler a mimic prince, though in blood and rank the equal of any king east of the Rhine.

Although the old Margrave was in a way a

mimic prince, because Bayreuth was small, he was not a mimic man. He was a man in the fullest, rarest and best sense of the word, for his life had been one of truth to himself and to all mankind. In his old age he lived happily in his little castle nestling among the mountain peaks, reaped the harvest of a manhood well tilled, and watched the sun as it set tranquilly on a life of sweet content.

No small part of the Margrave's reward was his son, Prince Henry or "Fritz Henry," as he was familiarly known by his friends. The fact that Prince Henry was over six feet tall soon played an important part in shaping his destiny. He had spent several years in the armies of England, France and Italy, where of course he had learned the ways of the world, but notwithstanding this questionable wisdom, had retained his father's gentleness of nature and purity of heart. At a time when nearly every man was a drunken roué, Fritz Henry seemed to have taken disgust from the evil on every side, and had profited by the bad example.

The old Margrave, too, differed from his princely brothers in many respects. He had, in his youth, made a marriage for love, and later in life had not tried to strengthen him-

self by forcing his children into repugnant alliances.

At the time of this conversation between Fritz Henry and his father, August the Stark was King of Poland and Elector of Saxony. He was the most dissolute of men. His family, it was said, consisted of one hundred and sixty-five sons and daughters, who were true children of a bad father. For many years he had been a kindly guardian to the small state of Bayreuth, paying to the Margrave a liberal pension in accordance with the terms of an old treaty.

Having many daughters to dispose of, King August one day suggested to his ministers a scheme for relieving his family congestion, and at the same time honoring his old friend of Bayreuth, by giving to the Hereditary Prince a fair daughter of Saxony to wife. He selected one of his daughters and asked his advisers to take the subject of her marriage to Fritz Henry under consideration. Fortunately for Henry, affairs of state moved slowly in Saxony, being constantly interrupted by matters of more importance that were conducive to the king's pleasure and entertainment.

A hint of this kindly intention had been sent by a friend in Dresden to the Margrave of

Bayreuth, and had brought consternation in its wake to father and son.

The morals of King August's court were not conducive to the growth of perfect womanhood, so as the daughter about to be proposed by his Majesty was neither good, handsome nor rich, Prince Henry quite naturally did not want her for a wife, nor did the Margrave want her for a daughter-in-law.

While the wind howled and screamed among the turrets and towers of Bayreuth Castle, the Margrave and Prince Henry sat in their arm-chairs before the fire, greatly troubled by the questionable honor their powerful friend and neighbor would thrust upon them.

"If we refuse King August's daughter, we shall offend him," said the Margrave. "He will withdraw his support from Bayreuth and may cut off our allowance. If he ceases payment how shall we support our old retainers? We cannot turn them out into the bleak winds. I am not deeply concerned for myself, but I must care for these old men and women who have been my friends and helpers all through life, and though I am poor, I must divide my crust with them. If we offend King August there will be no crust, for I am powerless to compel him to hold to the treaty. Still I can-

not bear that you should marry this painted courtesan of Dresden."

"I will marry her, father," said Prince Henry after a long pause, "if my refusal will bring misfortune to you. It would be hard and life would be a dreary prospect afterwards; but I will do it if it is your wish."

"You shall not marry her, even though your refusal may cost me my state. There is but one way to evade refusal or marriage. You must disappear—run away—before King August sends word of his intention. Go at once and do not tell me where you are going. Then when Dresden's envoys arrive, I can say with truth that I do not know where you are. Immediately after you have gone I will cause it to be known in Dresden that you are away from home, and we may be able to avert the offer, at least for a time. You have lived so much away from home that your absence will not seem unusual."

"I'll take your advice at once, father. If King August offers his fine daughter, you shall give your consent, subject, of course, to my approval, and I'll give my approval when—when they find me."

The old Margrave sat musing and gazing into the fire. Presently he said:

"I have sometimes hoped that King Frederick William of Prussia and Brandenburg might give you his second daughter, Charlotte. They say she is beautiful, but I am told she is very young, willful and thoughtless. Her temper may improve with age, but on the other hand, it may grow to be like her father's, in which case—" The Margrave held up his hand warningly, and after a brief pause concluded: "—in which case I should not want her for a daughter-in-law."

"Probably she is better than she is painted," suggested Henry.

"She may be, she may be. I believe the old king might be induced to give her to you if we were to allow him time to make up his stubborn mind, or if we could in some manner convince him that we do not want her. The subject was once broached by Grumkow but nothing came of it." The Margrave sat musing for a moment then continued: "If even a small part of what is said about the Prussian king is true, he must be an old devil—stark mad. Prince Fritz, I hear, is a fine boy, and the world is full of Wilhelmina's praises. But I am told the king hates them, and it is feared at Berlin he will work some great injury to them one of these fine days in a fit of madness. It is said

that he dotes on his daughter Charlotte, who defies him, disobeys him and has her own way in everything. Her father has given her the nickname "Don't Care" because that is her one answer when he grows angry and threatens her."

Henry laughed and said: "She must be interesting," and after a long thoughtful pause, the Margrave resumed:

"The Princess Wilhelmina must be a rare, lovable character. Those who know her say that in all the world there is no princess equaling her in beauty, gentleness and wisdom. You know our friend King August fell desperately in love with her during his recent visit to Berlin, and doubtless would have married her at once had she not been betrothed to Prince Frederick of England. She may yet become King August's bride if the English treaty falls. It has long been tottering. Did you ever hear of her meeting with the Great Bear of the North, Peter of Russia?"

"No, father."

"When Peter first clapped eyes on the little princess, then a child, he was so charmed with her fresh young beauty that he took her in his arms and kissed her till she slapped his face. Then he laughed and cried out: 'Ah, my little

beauty, you are fit to be queen of queens!' 'Not with you as king of kings!' she replied. The czar was so delighted with her spirit and her quick retort that he would have embraced her again, but she fled in childish indignation. Ah, my son, if you could have this beautiful Wilhelmina for your wife, how happy I should be. But she is for England or Dresden, or for some one who will aid King Frederick William in his Prussian policy, or perhaps I should say, who will answer Grumkow's purposes. I should be content with her younger sister for your wife, and am willing to run the risk of her temper."

"I want neither," said Henry. "I want no wife, not I. I'll be faithful to my sword, and who knows but I may some day win a wife whom I shall want for her own sake. When I find her I'll bring her home to dear old Bayreuth for your blessing."

"You shall have it, my son, if she is naught but the virtuous daughter of a burgher."

Prince Henry rose from his chair and stood with his back to the fire, while the old Margrave walked over to the window and gazed out on the snowstorm. After a long silence Prince Henry rang a bell and a page responded.

"Tell my servant Peter to come to me at once," said the prince.

Henry remained by the fireside and his father continued to gaze out the window. The old Margrave knew what the summons for Peter meant.

"Are you going now?" he asked, regretfully, turning his face toward his son. "You have been home less than a fortnight, and the storm has an ugly look."

"I don't want to go, father," said Henry, going to the Margrave's side and resting his hand gently on his shoulder. "I am running away from the princess of Dresden. Your advice is good, as usual. There is but one way to evade this marriage: lose myself in some out of the way corner of the world. I can't do it too quickly. To-morrow may be too late, so I'll go at once."

"You are right," answered the Margrave, "and I must not detain you."

When Peter came Prince Henry said: "Saddle the horses and arrange my saddle bags for a journey. I'll wear the breastplate and steel cap, and carry my hand guns and sword. Make haste, Peter, and bring the horses to the drawbridge as soon as possible. I'll be in the courtyard ready to start in half an hour. You, of course, go with me."

Half an hour later the prince and Peter were

riding out beneath the castle gates, bound for any place that would save Henry from King August's kindly purposes.

Soon after they had left the castle gates, Henry said: "We'll ride off into the mountains and let chance determine our route. I wish to be unknown. From now on, Peter, remember that I am Captain Henry Churchill. You are English and I speak English as if I were English born. So I'll take an English name, and we may easily pass for Englishmen. We are Captain Henry Churchill and servant Peter, of Cheapside, London, England."

"Not Cheapside, your Highness," suggested Peter. "Cheapside is no place for a gentleman to hail from. We'll say Westminster."

"Very well," returned Henry. "We are from Westminster. But you must not say 'your Highness'; it must be Captain Churchill."

"Ah yes," returned Peter. "I'll remember, your Highness—that is, Captain Churchill."

Henry and old Peter soon left the main road and took a mountain path over which their horses ploughed through the snow till near sunset, when they came to the main highway between Coburg and Chemnitz. As they turned into the road they saw six men approaching from the west, all heavily armed and

roughly dressed. One of the men hailed in German, and Henry waited till the little company came up to him. The captain or leader of the party seemed to be a Frenchman, for when he addressed Henry he spoke French, freely mingled with English and German. After he concluded that Henry was an Englishman, he spoke English.

"May I ask, are we on the right road to Chemnitz?" the French captain inquired.

"The way to Chemnitz is a crooked one," answered Henry, smiling and speaking English, which he was sure the fellow would understand, "and it is hard to say when one is on the right road. There are so many turnings and forkings in the mountains that you will lose your way if you are unfamiliar with the route. We are traveling to Chemnitz and I shall be glad to show you the way."

Henry hoped he might be able to induce the rough but stout band of warriors, who were all well armed and well mounted, to enlist under his banner. With so goodly a company, he was sure he would be welcomed into any army of Europe. His offer of guidance, therefore, was not entirely disinterested.

The French captain, who seemed grateful,

promptly accepted Henry's offer, and the party at once started forward toward Chemnitz.

Soon the storm increased and became so violent that the travelers agreed to stop for the night at a small village inn, where Henry offered to pay the cost of entertainment.

When he sprang from his horse, one of the troopers muttered to his neighbor: "*Himmel!* He's a long one. We must capture him. The master would give us a thousand marks for the fellow."

Prince Henry entered the inn to bespeak entertainment for his party, and Peter led the horses to the stable. The six travelers were left to themselves.

"*Der Teufel*, but we must take him," said one of the Germans, speaking to the leader. "He's a fine long one, and will bring us a good price."

"Shall we try to take him to-night?" asked another.

"We might take him while he sleeps," suggested the first speaker.

"We'll see, we'll see," answered the captain, impatiently. "All in good time. Don't think. Don't talk. Don't make plans. Leave the talking, thinking and planning to me. All that you blockheads have to do is to keep your

mouths shut and mind your own business. Your business is to strike when I tell you, and to keep still at all other times. Understand? As for this fellow, we shall see what we shall see. 'Be quick slowly' is the master's word, 'but be quick'."

"Yes, yes, 'but be quick'. That's the master's word," answered one of the men.

"And we will be quick," returned the captain. "But our long friend here would fight like forty devils, and we'll wait for a good opportunity to take him without a conflict. We don't want to seek broken heads for ourselves, and the master might break our heads for good and all if we broke this fellow's. He will be worth a great deal more to us with a whole head. Now, I say we'll travel with him till he trusts us: then he'll fall quietly into our net."

Soon after a late supper, the house was lost in darkness and its tired occupants were lost in sleep. Henry and Peter occupied a room by themselves, and their six traveling companions slept on the floor of the taproom. There was a whispered discussion among the ruffians concerning the best course to be followed in capturing their man, but as there were many miles to be traveled before reaching Chemnitz, and as the road wound through a mountainous, barren

and uninhabited country, the cautious Frenchman thought it better to take the chance of surprising him next day in the mountains rather than to try to seize him at the inn.

The next morning Prince Henry, Peter and their six companions started on their journey in a terrific snowstorm. Henry hoped that when they reached Chemnitz he should be able to capture his friends and form a little company to be offered, with himself, to the prince or king making the highest bid. He hoped to make his capture with blandishments and gold. The six ruffians, on the other hand, expected to make theirs by force.

After leaving the inn, each mile of the road carried the travelers farther into the mountains, and within a few hours they were in the midst of a wild cluster of small peaks and precipices. Snow had fallen heavily over night, and in many places the road was hidden. After the party had penetrated well into the heart of the mountains the road was entirely lost, and Henry sprang from his horse to reconnoiter on foot. Peter and three of the men were two hundred yards in the rear; the other three, including the French captain, were with Henry.

Henry threw his reins over the pommel of the saddle, and leaving his horse, walked a

short distance ahead to sound the snow, hoping to find the road. His pistols were in his saddle, and his sword, being cumbersome, had been left with them. Before he had taken twenty steps from his horse the others dismounted and quickly overtook him. The captain, following closely at his heels, called to him, saying politely but somewhat nervously:

"I have a word to speak with you, my friend."

Henry turned in surprise and looked into the muzzle of a hand gun.

"Well, why don't you say it?" he returned, concealing his surprise. He did not indicate by even so much as the fall of an eyelid that he saw the hand gun.

"Because—because—" stammered the somewhat disconcerted captain. "Because I like you and don't like the task ahead of me."

"What is the task ahead of you?" asked Henry. "Surely you don't intend to murder me."

"*Mon Dieu*, Monsieur! No, no, far from it! Far from it, I assure Monsieur," answered the Frenchman, hastily and politely. "It grieves me even to tell Monsieur that he is my prisoner."

The other two men immediately lifted their

"I have a word to speak with you, my friend"

hand guns and pointed them at Henry. At the same moment the leader whistled, when the three men who were with Peter seized the old man and informed him that, for the small sum of half a *pfennig,* they would blow his brains out. Trifling as the inducement was, Peter did not offer it, but allowed himself to be made captive.

"I see you have captured my servant," said Henry, "and as I am unarmed, I will make terms of surrender if you will be at all reasonable."

"I'm sorry. I grieve—I almost weep," said the polite captain, placing his hand on his heart and bowing low before Henry. "But I cannot give myself the pleasure of even promising Monsieur to be reasonable. I passionately wish I could, but it is impossible to make the promise, since the whole proceeding from Monsieur's standpoint, and perhaps from my own, is hardly to be justified between gentlemen. But I'll be pleased to hear what Monsieur has to say if he will be so kind as to say it with—with—what is it you English say?—Ah—suddenness."

"Tell me first why you wish to capture me," asked Henry, smiling at the Frenchman's "suddenness".

"Ah, Monsieur's request is not at all unex-

pected, and it is so reasonable that I should gladly make full answer if it would be—if it would be—what would you English say? Ah—to the expediency. But my heart is sore because I cannot tell it to you."

"Do you expect to rob me?" asked Henry, feeling sure, however, that robbery was not the purpose.

"Ah, the good God of my father and of my mother forbid," answered the Frenchman.

"Do you expect to hold me for ransom?" queried Henry. "If so, you will be disappointed, for I am poor as a church mouse, and all my friends could not raise a hundred pistoles."

"No, no, it is not ransom we want," answered the captain protestingly. "It is only Monsieur —Monsieur himself. He will pardon, but it may reassure Monsieur if I tell him that we know he is a poor devil who must coin his sword into crowns and pistoles if he would have money. Yes, we know, Monsieur—I should say 'Meester', that is the way you English speak it —we know Meester has no money that he would not give to us for the asking if we needed it. In our brief comradeship we have learned that he is generous. We have learned to love Meester, and if he will accept our guidance, we

will put money in his purse rather than take it from him."

"Take our horses, our arms and my purse and let us go. There is more money in the purse than you suppose," said Henry, ceasing to be amused by the Captain's polite speeches, and tossing the purse at the fellow's feet.

"No, no. We have horses and arms to spare," returned the captain. "As for your purse, keep it, and we will put more gold in it if need be."

The captain took the purse from the snow and politely returned it to Henry. The situation was growing bewildering to the young man.

"If it is neither robbery nor ransom, tell me, pray, what in the devil's name you want with me," demanded Henry, smiling in spite of suppressed anger. "Do you believe that I am a criminal? Do you imagine that you know me?"

Henry knew the ruffians did not know him, for evidently the French captain supposed he had captured an Englishman.

"Indeed we do not believe that Meester is a criminal. We know he is not. We love him and we want him to go with us because—just because we want the pleasure of his company.

That is why we are taking you;—at least that is all the why I can give you."

"You know nothing of me. You do not even know where I am from," insisted Henry.

"Nor do we want to know," answered the fellow, shrugging his shoulders. "Meester may be English. Who can tell? But in view of the uses to which he will be put, it is greatly to our interest not to know what he is or where he is from, and though the information would be to us pleasing, we beg that he will not honor us with it. Monsieur is himself, and that is all sufficient for us to know."

"Where do you mean to take me?" asked Henry.

"Ah, Monsieur's request is so reasonable that to refuse it is to pain," responded the captain, bowing before Henry. "Pardon my seeming discourtesy. I cannot give you light. You will learn all these interesting facts from my master after—a long journey. If you have any more reasonable questions, I beg you to make haste, for we must be traveling."

The captain was beginning to show his teeth.

"One more," answered Henry. "What are you going to do with my servant?"

"Ah, at last there is to me of pleasure," responded the French captain, still speaking

English. "You ask to me a question that I can answer. It will be to detain your servant for an hour after we have resumed our journey. Then it will be to relieve him of his arms, and to warn him not to follow us on pain of death. Then it will be to direct him to return forthwith to his home, and to tell your friends that it has been to you to be captured by a band of kind-hearted brigands."

"May I have a word with my servant?" asked Henry.

"*Mon Dieu!* Again it is to pain. I grieve. I weep. I—"

"Oh, well, let us start at once," interrupted Henry. "If poor old Peter is to be kept in the cold for an hour after we start, he will be frozen if we don't go immediately. Will you give him this silver? I fear the old man has no money."

"Ah, that is to me of pleasure once more," cried the Frenchman. "But permit. I myself will give to Peter of gold. Silver were unworthy."

The captain hurried down the road to where Peter and his captors were standing, spoke briefly to one of the men, handed Peter a gold coin and said:

"When you return to England, tell your master's friends he was captured by brigands,

but tell them also that no harm shall befall him. If you attempt to follow us, you will be shot. Now, you may understand."

Peter intimated that he fully understood the distressing situation, and the captain returned to Henry.

After removing all arms from Henry's saddle, the Frenchman said again in French:

"Now, if Monsieur will kindly mount his horse, we'll continue our journey. Will it not be a novel experience for Monsieur to ride with brigands?"

"You're not a brigand," answered Henry, "and I am sure you are acting under a mistake. A word of explanation from you might save me a great deal of annoyance, and might avert serious trouble for you later on."

"There is no mistake, Monsieur," answered the French captain. "I pledge you my word we do not even think we know who you are. We hope you are nobody. If you are anybody, our work will all have been in vain, and our master, instead of being pleased, as we hope he will be, may be greatly displeased."

"Who is your master?" asked Henry.

"Our master?" repeated the French captain. "Oh, our master? Why, our master is the devil. Yes, that is it. He is the devil. I tell

you not one word—not one syllable—not one letter of untruth. He is really the devil, and when you know him you will learn that I am a truthful man. I cannot tell you more. Therefore, mount, my dear Monsieur, and though your questions are all reasonable and ought to be answered, please reserve them till a time when you can make them to one who can and doubtless will answer you in full, though perhaps not to your entire satisfaction. Come, come. Shall I bind Monsieur's wrists, or will he give me his parole and go with us peaceably?"

"I give my parole," answered Henry.

"I thank Monsieur for his kindness, and trust him without a doubt, for of course Monsieur knows that a broken parole means death. I trust him, but with his permission, I'll tie one end of this rope to his horse's bit, and the other end to Big John yonder. There! Now we are ready! Permit me to assist Monsieur to mount."

"I need no help," said Henry, laughing. "I am still strong enough to mount a horse. I thank you, captain, for your politeness, but you have not frightened me so badly that I am weak."

"Would anything frighten Meester?" asked

the captain, smiling pleasantly. "When my master, the devil, learns that we have brought him a man who fears nothing, neither the mouth of a gun nor the face of the devil, he will say, 'Good, good', for he loves a brave man, and I, perhaps, shall receive a handful of pistoles the more."

"May it be a double handful of pistoles," answered Henry, not to be outdone in politeness. Then he mounted his horse.

After all were mounted they moved forward. The French captain, who earlier in the day had affected ignorance of the road, now seemed to know it well enough, and led the way through a mountain pass, leaving poor old Peter tearfully watching his master, as Henry rode out of sight on his journey to a world of new happenings, and perhaps of marvelous fortune.

CHAPTER III

HIS MOTHER AND HER SON

At three o'clock in the afternoon of the same stormy day in March, Adolph, Margrave of Schwedt, was very drunk, and his mother sitting near him was sound asleep. Usually at three o'clock his serene Highness was still quite alert, for it was not Adolph's custom to reach his maximum condition until say four or half past. By that time the servants felt themselves more or less aggrieved if he were not asleep, since in the household of the Margrave, the mice would play when Adolph was drunk.

The cause of the advanced stage reached by the Margrave at so early an hour on that particular day was an exciting conversation, approaching at times to the point of discussion, that had been carried on during the earlier part of the afternoon, chiefly by his mother, the Margravine.

So it may be easily understood that while the Margravine's animated discourse postponed for a time her Highness's after-dinner nap, it advanced Adolph's happiness by an hour, and

brought forgetfulness before its time, as long continued good advice is apt to do.

To follow closely the drift of his mother's conversation, Adolph required many extra flagons of sour beer to punctuate her Highness's remarks, to stand as exclamation points when she grew eloquent, and to emphasize her words when she wished to be emphatic.

Thus it appears that while the Margrave of Bayreuth and his son were holding discourse on the subject of marriage and giving in marriage, Adolph and his mother were discussing the same interesting topic in their good city of Schwedt many hundreds of miles away, and singularly enough, the Princess Wilhelmina was their theme.

This unusually earnest conversation covered a large field of kindred topics, but it is necessary to give only those portions that bear directly on the subject matter of this history.

"I tell you, Adolph, you're a fool," insisted the Margravine, with sharp emphasis. "You are nearly twenty-eight years old and should know better."

"Doubtless you're right, mother," returned Adolph. "Nothing so disturbs a man's rest as wisdom. Wisdom makes a man think, mother; it makes him doubt his sweet illusions;

but worst of all, it makes him believe damnable truths. It makes him—*ach,* well, mother, I hope you're right. A fool I am, a fool may I remain."

After delivering himself of a jest or a bit of irony, the Margrave's eyes blinked rapidly for two or three seconds, as if to say, "I may not laugh at my own humor, but I think *that* is rather good."

The Margrave's eyes were of so light a blue that at times they seemed to be almost colorless. He was very short, very round and very fat. His face was very broad, and his hands and feet were larger than any man had a right to possess for his own exclusive use.

"No, you're not a fool," impatiently cried the Margravine, regardless of self-contradiction. "Many persons who have not one-half your brains, nor one-tenth your wit, nor one-hundredth part of your learning, believe you are a fool, but they don't know you, *liebling,* they don't know you."

The old lady reached over to Adolph's chair and caressingly took his hand. This was early in the afternoon, before the Margravine had become either eloquent or emphatic.

"They think you are a fool," she continued, "because they judge you by the expression of

your face and by what they call your foolish grin. To me the grin is a sweet smile, because I know that back of it are intelligence, gentleness, honor and truth. Others do not understand that what they are pleased to call your silly expression is merely beer and kindliness, so judging as the world usually does, by surface appearances, they put you down for a fool. No, my son, you're not a fool in a general way; it is only in this particular case that you are lacking. I am provoked that you, who are wise and of discerning judgment at all other times, should be a fool now when you need wisdom more than at any other period in your life. Great things await you, Adolph; great things of which you are wholly worthy, and your only folly consists in your present fear, doubt and hesitancy. No, my son, you're not a fool."

"Please, mother, don't take from me my only hope," pleaded Adolph, blinking and chuckling till his fat sides shook. "You are wrong; I am an elaborate fool in a broad, beautiful, comprehensive sense. But in this particular case—" The Margrave sighed, quaffed a great potation of beer, and continued: "—but in this case—well, mother, you will pardon me for saying so, but I am wise and you are a fool; a fool to believe that any woman, least of all a

young and beautiful girl, could care for me save for what she could get from me."

"No, no, son. No, no," pleaded the loving old mother.

"Yes, mother, you are wrong. You are not content with mere folly; you insist on nothing less than downright insanity when you allow your love for me to raise a hope that the most beautiful princess in the world could—could—*Ach,* dear mother, you must see a physician that can minister to a mind diseased."

The Margrave laughed softly, but there was a note of pain in his voice and an expression of keen regret glimmered for a moment on his kindly, ugly face.

"No, mother," he continued with a sigh; "I am too short by a foot and too broad by nearly two feet to suit a lady's taste. You have just said that my face wears the expression of a fool. *Ach,* there is nothing about me to please a lady. I know it; please don't arouse my vanity. It sleeps and may cause me a deal of trouble if it wakens."

The Margrave paused for a moment, straightened up in his chair, dropped for a time his bantering mood, and spoke with sorrowing earnestness.

"I know that I'm not a fool, but with this

grinning, thick-lipped, blear-eyed landscape of a face, I can't make the world believe otherwise." Again he fell back to the jesting vein: "It is true that at times pearls of wisdom and gems of wit drop from my lips, but the trouble is this: people see me all the time and hear me only part of the time, so you see the chances are against me proportionately and my face is sure to win. Why, therefore, should I try to—to climb to the mountain top only to fall off? I'll remain just a contented fool, drink my beer of afternoons with my dear old mother, and after all, I'll beat the majority of mankind in the race for happiness."

"No, no, Adolph," said the Margravine, gently. "The Princess Wilhelmina is so kind, so sweet and so wise that she will soon learn to see your worth. She will not laugh at you as giddy fools do. She will revel in your wit, glory in your wisdom, love your gentle strength, and eagerly glean knowledge from your learning."

"*Ach, Mutter-liebling*, I wish I could agree with you."

"You may, you must, you shall!" insisted the Margravine. "Where is there a German born prince that speaks English as you do?—and you know Mina loves the language better

than she loves her own. She has been instructed in it since her babyhood because of her betrothal to the English prince. I admit that the treaty of betrothal to Prince Frederick of England still exists in a manner, but it holds only by a thread, and has never been a treaty in fact. The English king, George, will never consent to the marriage, and Grumkow says that Mina's father, though to all appearances abiding by the old contract, would die before entering into an alliance with his hated brother-in-law."

"Grumkow knows if any one does," interrupted Adolph, only too eager to be convinced.

"Yes, you may be sure Grumkow knows whereof he speaks," returned the Margravine, "for he is something more than a mere prime minister—he is the king's rudder and sails. Frederick William moves only as Grumkow pulls the tiller ropes."

"True, true," said Adolph, "and Grumkow is our friend."

"Now listen to me, my dear son, and this is for *your* ear only. Grumkow writes to me that the King of Prussia will soon repudiate this quasi-treaty with England, and that before many days the beautiful Wilhelmina will be free to marry elsewhere. Listen. Grumkow

says she shall be yours for the sake of the allodial estates, and—and perhaps for private reasons of his own. Whatever Grumkow wishes King Frederick to do, the king usually does."

"But what has the hatred of the King of Prussia and King George for each other to do with the princess's hatred of me?" asked Adolph, shrugging his shoulders. "She has seen me but once; that was enough. *Ach, Gott!* too much. She has a sweet voice and a pretty laugh, but no voice is sweet when it laughs at you. There is a vast difference between being laughed at and laughed with. I saw the princess two years ago, and as you know, her beauty and sweetness made me lose my heart. I thank God I saved my head, though I also came near losing it. I've carried a burden of unrest ever since. True, it is not killing me—"

"No, no, my son. No, no, it is not."

"But I'm no such fool as to want to add to it. The princess saw me, and you attributed her laughter to inexperience and youth. You see, mother, to be laughed at I need but to be seen, and seen too oft, familiar with my face, I'm not endured, nor pitied, nor embraced. A woman is more apt to love a man who she fears will kill her than one at whom she inclines to

laugh. Farewell, a long farewell, dear mother, to all your dreams of greatness. I'm wedded to my beer, and I'll remain true to the one mistress that I know will be true to me."

"What will the Princess Mina have to do with the choice of a husband?" asked the Margravine. "Her mad old father will not consult her. He will consider himself overindulgent if he notifies her when he makes his choice. His will is law throughout all Brandenburg and Prussia, and every other will, to whomsoever it belongs, must be opposed for the pure love of stubbornness. Above all, neither Mina nor the Crown Prince Fritz shall have their way in any respect, however just or reasonable it may be. Therefore, Mina's inclination for a man would ruin his prospects with the king."

"And the lack of her inclination would ruin her prospects with me," said Adolph, gloomily.

"It is true that Grumkow rules the king," continued the Margravine, unmindful of Adolph's remark, "but he does it indirectly and frequently accomplishes his purpose by pretending to oppose the will of his master. Grumkow says the king hates Fritz and Mina. No one knows why. But I am sure it is true that he hates his own flesh and blood, and many per-

sons at the courts of Berlin and Potsdam believe he wishes the prince and the princess dead."

"*Ach,* he is an old devil, and Grumkow is his imp," exclaimed Adolph, shaking his head regretfully.

"Yes—yes," returned the Margravine, impatient at Adolph's interruption. "Grumkow also says the prince is a dissolute young fellow and a disobedient son, and that he would be tried and executed as any other guilty citizen if his disobedience reached a point where treason could be charged. Yes, it's hard to believe, but it is true that the old king would not, for a moment, stand in the way of justice or of injustice if his son were on trial for treason. Grumkow has often told me that he believes the old king's bad heart would rejoice if his son should be court-martialed and shot. Oh, he's crazy, that old king! Mad, mad!"

"Not so mad as he is bad," suggested Adolph.

"Yes, my son, he's mad, and soon will die. Mark my word, Adolph, you, who are the first prince of the blood, may become King of Prussia and Brandenburg without a dissenting voice if the Crown Prince dies too, and you the husband of the Princess Wilhelmina. Our uncle,

the Emperor of Austria, ardently desires the match, and our cousin, King George of England, who hates his brother-in-law, would rejoice. King Frederick William likes you. I know not why—perhaps because you can drink so much beer—but for some reason he likes you, and if we are on hand when the English betrothal is broken, Grumkow and Baron von Seckendorf, my uncle's spies at the court of Berlin, will see that the hand of the Princess Mina is offered to you, my son, is offered to you."

"But, mother, I could not marry a woman against her will," objected Adolph.

"That need not be, my son," returned the old lady, impatiently. "I tell you, the princess is not only sweet of nature and beautiful, as you well know, but she is wise and learned, and will in time see your worth. If she does not love you at first, she will soon learn to after marriage, for any man, unless he be a fool, can win a woman if he has her always by his side."

The old lady uttered the last sentence hesitatingly, and her doubt seemed to infect the Margrave.

"You do not believe what you say, mother," said Adolph, sleepily.

The long-delayed after-dinner nap was begin-

ning to assert itself, and the Margravine was almost ready to surrender. "I—I think I do, son," ventured the drowsy old lady. "But in any case, I'm sure you could win the princess, and I know she would be contented and happy in your arms."

"Do you believe what you are saying, mother?" asked the Margrave, arousing himself and speaking earnestly. "I would give half the years of my life if I could even dream of the bliss of possessing her and her love. In all the world no heart bears a greater burden of love than mine holds for this beautiful princess, and even a faint hope of winning her would make me the happiest man in Europe. But I would not take her without her love. I would die first."

"We can at least try for it, Adolph," returned the Margravine. "She will be compelled to marry some one that does not suit her. You can't save her from that fate by refusing her hand. If the unfortunate girl is to be forced to marry against her will, she would be better off to marry you, who are kind and good, than to marry a dissolute fool like the English prince, or a beast like the Duke of Weissenfels. She certainly would choose you before either of these."

"It would not be flattering to be chosen because I am the least of three evils," suggested the Margrave, drowsily.

"No, no," said the old lady, whose head was beginning to nod. "But if she is so great a fool as not to see you as you are—you are, why —why, we'll not marry her—we'll not marry her. We'll just let her—let her—let her—her marry Weissenfels, and then she will be—will be sorry—sorry—that—that—that—" but the good old woman had run out of words. It was three o'clock for the Margravine, and she slept sweetly, soundly, noisily.

It was near the hour of three for Adolph, also, though he was blissfully unconscious of the fact that the clock had struck for his mother, so he rolled about in his great armchair, chuckling, laughing and talking to an audience composed of his sleeping mother and himself.

"*You* marry the princess, mother," said the Margrave, chuckling softly and laughing at the thought. "She's more apt to take you than me. *You* marry her mother—I mean *you* marry *her,* not her mother. Think of you marrying her mother!" Adolph laughed softly and continued, as if speaking to himself: "Never would do—never would do. Don't

marry her mother; marry Stumpy, the old king." It was rapidly approaching three o'clock. "Let Mina marry Stumpy's mother. *Ach,* tush. I don't know who's going to marry who, and I—I—don't—don't—care—a—a *kreutzer*—er—er—not a *kreutz*—" Neither did he care. His head fell forward, his chin rested on his breast, and the clock struck three for Adolph, Margrave of Schwedt.

The conversation, brought to an untimely end at three o'clock, was resumed next morning. The Margravine urged upon Adolph her belief that the Princess Mina could and would learn to love him soon after marriage. Poor Adolph —than whom there was no gentler, kindlier soul on earth—believing that his mother, being a woman, knew more about a woman's heart than any man could know, at length felt the weight of her argument, eagerly grasped at the straw of hope she threw to him, and after much sober reasoning pro and con, began to see the situation as she and he wished to see it.

But he was wrong in his premises. No woman knows a woman's heart as a man may know it. A woman judges other women by herself, and in all the world there are no two women alike. A woman never sees all of another woman's heart. That high privilege is

left for a fortunate man. Beyond a few generalities and certain small particulars, a woman is at sea concerning her sex, frequently including herself. If she would know the truth she must appeal to a man of experience, and even then she will not learn much.

Adolph had no experience to draw upon. He had gained no knowledge of the other sex that would help him in the present case, but down in his heart he feared his mother was wrong, and doubted if it were possible for a man ever to *win* a woman's love. An instinct born of his gentleness seemed to tell him that it was a thing she must give, and that it must not only be given willingly but because she cannot help giving.

The Margravine had not thought it necessary to tell her son that she had that day received letters from Prime Minister Grumkow and from Field Marshal Baron von Seckendorf, asking her to bring Adolph to Berlin with a view to a hasty marriage with the Princess Wilhelmina. These two men, though high in the councils of Frederick William, were secret agents and spies of the Emperor of Austria, who sought to absorb Brandenburg and Prussia, and hoped to use Adolph of Schwedt in his nefarious scheme. The emperor and his agents con-

sidered the Margrave little more than a half-witted fool. They knew he was in love with the Princess Wilhelmina, and did not doubt that he would marry her eagerly, and then become a willing tool in their hands. This history will tell whether they were right or wrong in their opinion of him.

It is a great pleasure to argue with one who wishes to be convinced, and conversely, it is delightful to be convinced along the lines of one's own great desire. So the ardor of the Margravine and the heart of the Margrave prevailed, and within a few days they started for Berlin to be present at the explosion which Grumkow had said would soon take place between King George of England and Frederick William, the Stormy King of Prussia and Bradenburg.

CHAPTER IV

A WAYSIDE INN

For three days Prince Henry and his friends marched over unfrequented mountain roads, avoiding the more public highways. They traveled till dark each day, stopped over night at out of the way inns, and started early each morning on their journey.

Henry soon lost all knowledge of his whereabouts, and could not even guess at either the distance or the direction he had traveled.

Late in the evening of the third day, the French captain ordered a halt for the night at an obscure inn on the outskirts of a small mud-surrounded village.

The situation, awkward and wearisome as it was, had begun to have its redeeming qualities. The captain and all the members of the ruffian company seemed to do their utmost to be polite and attentive to their prisoner, and although he was in a constant state of wonder concerning his destination and fate, the manner in which the whole affair was conducted led him to believe that the outcome of the adventure would not be altogether bad. After

he had grown accustomed to the new state of affairs, he began to enjoy it, and the element of uncertainty gave it zest. It must not be forgotten that he was running away from the daughter of August, and wanted to find a hiding place. The men that had captured him might be of great assistance in finding it.

Thus Henry was not only content to remain with his captors, but was eager to reach his destination, wherever it might be, and to learn the fate in store for him. Concerning his fate he had no hint, neither had he fear.

On entering the taproom of the inn at which the party had stopped for the night, Henry found a solitary guest sitting at a long table, drinking beer A fat, thick-lipped, smiling face beamed up to the newcomer, and the man spoke in good though broken English.

"Good evening," said he, with a broad grin.

Henry answered his salutation in the same language, and took a chair on the opposite side of the table.

"Do you like beer?" asked the fat man, still speaking English.

"I prefer wine," answered Henry.

"*Ach, Himmel!* You should learn to like beer. When you reach Potsdam, you must learn to like beer if you hope to win the favor

of the Prussian king. I tell you, my friend, I like you because you speak English so well. Damn this guttural tongue of ours. I like English because the Princess Mina speaks it and loves it, and I like you because you speak it. Are you English?"

"Perhaps I am," answered Henry.

"*Ach,* well," replied his fat friend, "as I said, I like you and I want to advise you. You must learn to drink beer by the quart, by the gallon, by the barrel. I'll tell you a secret. King Frederick William is fond of me because I can drink so much beer. I can drink more beer than any two men in Lower Brandenburg, and I'll lay a wager on it. But these Lower Brandenburgers know nothing of the gentle art of beer drinking. In truth, it flourishes only in my good city of Schwedt, and one must go there to see it in its most beautiful development. My dear sir," continued the beer drinker, giving Henry the English salutation, "I have seen a little Schwedtish man, only half as tall as you, and not half so broad as I, drink a bucketful of beer without taking his lips from the rim. *Ach,* my friend, it was beautiful. And that little man took the beer home with him, too, but of course he could not wear his belt. I am much larger than the little man, and

I could easily do it. It was my beer drinking that first attracted his Prussian Majesty and caused him to want me for a son-in-law."

It is unnecessary to say that the fat man was comfortably drunk.

"Ah, his majesty wants you for a son-in-law!" exclaimed Fritz Henry, concluding that he had met a lunatic or a great wag. "I salute you, prince."

"Not 'prince'," answered the humorist, "simply Adolph, Margrave of Schwedt and Knight of Brandenburg, at your service." Whereupon he rose and bowed profoundly.

Henry turned upon him in astonishment. He had often heard of the Margrave of Schwedt, and remembered many extraordinary stories of his eccentricities. He knew that the Margrave of Schwedt was the head of one of the oldest, noblest families in Germany, closely related by blood to the Kings of England and Prussia and the Emperor of Austria. This fellow surely was nothing more than a vulgar inn loafer, created for the sole purpose of consuming beer.

"My friend, you certainly are both bold and peculiar in the honors you thrust upon yourself," said Henry, good-naturedly. "You elect yourself Margrave of Schwedt, and son-in-law

to the Prussian King, as easily as I might call myself a trooper."

"*Auf der Teufel,* but I *am* Schwedt!" said the king's prospective son-in-law, rising to his feet, bending politely, and pressing his finger tips against his expansive breast. "I *am* Adolph, Margrave of Schwedt, and I can prove it to you by my mother who is upstairs. And I have received an invitation to go to Berlin to marry Princess Wilhelmina, and if you think I lie—*der Teufel*—my friend, I'll fight you now!"

"Accept my apology," said Henry, greatly amused, and almost convinced that his companion was really the Margrave of Schwedt. "An invitation to Berlin to marry the Princess Wilhelmina! My friend, you are a lucky man. Allow me to offer my congratulations."

Adolph sat down.

Henry laughed, but the Margrave did not appreciate the irony.

"Yes," said Adolph, emphatically; "to marry the Princess Wilhelmina, though there is a condition—a condition of my own making. But the offer of the hand of the Princess Wilhelmina, even with an 'if', is better than the offer of any other princess in all the world without it." Here the Margrave rose to his feet,

leaned earnestly over the table toward Henry, and continued: "What is an 'if'? Two little letters. Wipe them off the slate and it is easy to put 'is' in their place. Shall I ever wipe the slate? I cannot tell. You cannot tell. No one can tell. But this I tell you, friend; she is the gentlest, the wittiest, the most beautiful princess—the—the—*Ach!* You should see her! Every curve is as perfect as a rainbow's bend. Every line has the grace of the Medician Venus. Her eyes are like the bright stars on a moonless night, and her voice—*Ach,* friend, it is as the music of a glad heart! Her words are gentle and wise, and her thoughts are as sweet and as fresh as a morning breath from a field of roses. *Ach,* I tell you, I love, I love! But wait till you reach Potsdam and see her. Then you will know for yourself. Even my love-eloquent tongue cannot describe to you the smallest part of her perfections. One must see her and love her, and dream of her to realize her beauty. I have said—much."

Exhausted by his efforts, the Margrave resumed his seat and buried his face in the mouth of a huge flagon.

"But I am not going to Potsdam nor Berlin," said Henry, still speaking English. "I am the captive of this band of outlaws and God only

knows where they are taking me and what their intentions are when we reach our journey's end."

Adolph sprang to his feet, pointed dramatically at Fritz Henry, paused for a moment, and said in a tragic manner:

"You were kidnaped?"

"Yes."

"I knew it," responded the other. "I knew it when I saw you coming in with your fine body guard of ruffians. I knew it by your height. You are intended for The Regiment."

Adolph leaned backward and fixed his gaze on Henry, who whistled to express surprise, laughed and said:

"Upon my word, I believe you're right! I have been pondering for three days and nights trying to find out why I was waylaid, and you, who know nothing of my case, have solved the riddle in thirty seconds."

Henry stretched back in his chair and laughed. The Margrave remained serious and said with suppressed pride:

"Yes, that is true."

"I had forgotten all about Frederick William's custom of kidnaping tall men for his Giant Regiment," said Fritz Henry, looking at the Margrave with increased interest. "Prob-

ably Berlin *is* my destination, and perhaps I am to become a Prussian Grenadier. Ah, Margrave, your wit should make your fortune."

The Margrave smiled broadly, shiningly, drank at one swallow nearly a pint of beer, smiled again and said:

"Well, if you will have it so, perhaps I am no fool. But, my friend, I would ask a favor. Please don't tell any one of your discovery. A fool has so many advantages and immunities in this world that with wit he can overthrow mountains. I have been told that faith is helpful, but wit, my friend, wit is what will really throw the mountain on his back, and a fool with wit is thrice armed. Wits! Of course I have wits. Fortune? Of course my wits shall win it for me! You are going to Berlin? When you are there, my friend, stand by and see my wits operate. Just watch them, please, but not a word, mind you; not a word to indicate that you even suspect I am not a fool. Wit in one who seems to be a fool is doubly strong. I will show you a mystery. A word which, from a man of acknowledged wisdom, may pass almost unnoticed, falling from my lips, would be looked upon as a wonder of sapiency. The world always considers the source, you see—but you understand."

"Yes, I understand," replied Fritz Henry, "and I'll respect your unusual wish."

"Thank you," answered Adolph, gravely. "But concerning the doings of my wit at Berlin, listen! Look at me." Henry looked and with difficulty suppressed a laugh. "Notice my face," continued the Margrave. "Beautiful?"

"I should not call it so," answered Fritz Henry.

"No. It is as far from being beautiful as one can well imagine," said the Margrave, seriously and somewhat sadly.

"Perhaps you are right," answered Fritz Henry.

"Now notice, if you please, my belt line; my legs; my feet. *Himmel!* Did God ever give such feet to another man?" The Margrave looked at his feet, nodded his head regretfully, and sighed as if the question he had asked were one to be given up.

Henry laughed outright.

"Good," continued the Margrave. "The 'if' I spoke of in his Prussian Majesty's offer of the princess is this. I may have the princess if I win her and her mother. The 'if' exists because I wish it to exist, not that the will of the princess or the queen would in any way

affect the king's purposes. With this face, this body, these legs and feet, if I win the princess—I say *if* I win the princess, I believe it will be the greatest achievement ever accomplished by a man's unaided wit. But I'm going to win her. Mother says I shall, and mother is a wise woman. You shall meet my mother to-morrow, and then judge for yourself."

"With pleasure," answered Henry, who was sleepy. Turning to the French captain, he said: "With your permission, I'll go to bed. You need not set a guard, for I am quite as eager to go to Berlin as you are to take me. Had you told me your destination, you would have saved yourself the trouble of guarding me these last three days. I am glad to go to Berlin, but, my friend, when we reach there, you may be glad to get away."

"It may be true. I have doubted of late," answered the French captain. "I told Big John but yesterday I feared we had bitten off more than we could swallow, and perhaps had taken a greater fish than we could land. We have tried to be courteous to Monsieur, and I hope that Monsieur will stand our friend at the Berlin if our master has the displeasure of our zeal. Should Monsieur prefer to travel to

Berlin alone, or if he wishes to go free, he may do either to his pleasure."

"No," said Henry. "You must finish what you have begun, and I'll try to see that no ill fortune overtakes you in Berlin. The adventure may fall in strangely with my desire, but we shall see. Good-night, Margrave."

"Good-night, sir—sir— Shall I say 'my lord' or 'earl' or—I have not the pleasure of your title, nor is your name on my tongue."

"There is no title," answered Fritz Henry. "My name is Captain Henry Churchill, one time of the army of—of—many countries."

"Shall I not say 'Sir'? I am sure you are a knight?" suggested the Margrave, interrogatively.

"I am not even a knight," answered Henry.

"*Ach,* you shall be. I myself will make you a Knight of Brandenburg. It is my own Order. At present I am its only member, but it will grow—it will grow, and the day may come when the Cordon Bleu, the Cordon Rouge, and the Garter will not be of greater repute."

"I thank you," said Henry. "Good-night."

The next morning Captain Henry met the Margravine of Schwedt as she was about to enter her coach, and the two parties started on

the last stage of their journey to Berlin. Late in the same day they entered the muddy city.

The Margrave and his mother at once presented themselves at the palace and were welcomed and put to bed. Prince Henry was taken to the castle, and was conducted to a comfortable room. He asked to be presented to the king at once, but the hour was late and the request was refused. He was not disappointed, for he had not made up his mind what course he wished to take. He knew he could regain his liberty at any time by announcing that he was the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth; therefore his position held no terrors for him.

Membership in the Grenadier Regiment under the name of Captain Churchill would secure him the hiding place he wanted, and protect him from the kindly intentions of August the Stark. By becoming a Grenadier, he would find not only a hiding place, but also an opportunity to earn a livelihood.

On the other hand, to enter the spectacular regiment of this half-mad old king seemed to be so great a degradation that, after thinking it over, Henry determined to tell King Frederick William as soon as possible next morning that his Majesty's over-zealous recruiting officers had kidnaped the Hereditary Prince of

Bayreuth, who in rank was the equal of the Prussian Crown Prince.

But much that we intend to do to-morrow is like to-morrow itself in that it never comes to pass.

CHAPTER V

THE PRINCESS BEAUTIFUL

When Fritz Henry wakened the next morning, he was still of the same opinion, and after breakfast demanded to be taken before the king. A royal audience was easily obtained by the humblest person in Prussia, but the king was always eager to receive new recruits for the Grenadier Regiment, and treated them with great consideration. The Grenadier Regiment was dearer to his heart than the queen and all her children. He loved it better than all his other possessions. He knew every man in it by name, and when his recruiting officers were so fortunate as to kidnap a tall man and bring him safely to Berlin, he made it his most important business to see the new conscript, and, if possible, to win him. So Fritz Henry's request for an audience was granted and he started for the palace, accompanied by an officer of the regiment and the Frenchman who had kidnaped him.

Henry entered the audience chamber, which in this case happened to be the Mirrored Hall, in an indignant state of mind. He had resolved

not only to disclose his own identity and to demand immediate release, but to give King Frederick William to understand that there could be no amity between Brandenburg and Bayreuth until his Prussian Majesty had made humble apology and proper amends. But a man's fate usually turns on the pivot of a moment, and that proved to be true with Fritz Henry on this occasion.

When he entered the audience chamber, the first person he saw was our friend Adolph, Margrave of Schwedt. The second was a fair girl of nineteen or twenty, standing near the Margrave, and Fritz Henry's life turned on the pivot of that moment. He had never seen the Princess Wilhelmina, but he knew that the girl standing beside the Margrave was her Royal Highness.

Presently Adolph espied Henry in the crowd of courtiers, nodded to him pleasantly, and then spoke to the princess. She turned her head toward Fritz Henry, discovered him, and much to her own astonishment and to Henry's surprise, nodded as if in recognition. The next instant she was scarlet. She had not intended to nod, for, of course, she did not know even so much as the stranger's name. To punish the young man's audacity in allowing

her to nod to him, the princess turned away, feeling that in some way she had been badly used.

Henry's resolve to ask the king to release him, and his purpose to insist upon a royal apology evaporated when he first beheld the princess, but when she nodded to him, he determined to ask the king to take him into the regiment as a favor that could not be too highly prized. Hardly had this resolve taken form when he was summoned before the king, who was standing like the statue of stubbornness in a little open space left by the surrounding courtiers.

"Well," said the king, when Fritz Henry approached. "Well?"

Henry was about to kneel in saluting his Majesty, but the king said gruffly: "No, no, man. Get up! I hear you have behaved well on your journey and that you desire to enter our regiment."

"As to my behavior," responded Henry, smiling broadly, "I refer your Majesty to the men who conducted me to Berlin. I am not aware that I have expressed a desire to enter your Majesty's regiment, but—but—" Henry paused, looked at the floor for a moment, glanced toward the Princess Wilhelmina, turned

his face again toward the king, and said: "But I now do make the request. I wish to enter your Majesty's Grenadier Regiment."

On hearing Henry express so unusual a desire, the princess, who stood within three yards of him, quickly turned with a look of unfeigned surprise. Her eyes seemed to be interrogation points, for under like conditions she was accustomed to hear entreaty, indignation and threats from men her father had kidnaped.

Henry returned the princess's gaze and answered the question asked by her eyes as if he were speaking to the king.

"Yes, I wish to enter the most famous regiment in the world under the most famous king in Europe."

No man was more disposed to shy at flattery than hard Prussian Majesty, so replying to Fritz Henry, he asked:

"What is it you want that you flatter us?"

"I want nothing, your Majesty," answered Fritz Henry, "unless you wish to give me a commission. I was once a captain in the army of King Charles of Sweden, and for two years bore a captain's commission in the English army. I have served in Italy and France, but

if your Majesty has no commission for me, I am willing to take my place in the ranks."

"What is your name?" demanded the king.

"I am known as Captain Henry Churchill."

"You are known as Captain Henry Churchill?" asked his Majesty. "But what is your name?"

"I have given you a name, and perhaps if your Majesty will take a second thought, you will not wish to know any other. I am over six feet tall and in good health. I have been led to believe that your Majesty cares to know nothing more about a man who wishes to enter the regiment."

The king's lips emitted a sound, half grunt, half snort, that seemed to acknowledge the truth of what Prince Henry had said, and after a moment's pause, his Majesty asked:

"Where are you from?"

Henry smiled, looked toward the king, and answered: "I should suppose your Majesty would not care to know too much about me since you have caused me to be kidnaped. Too much knowledge, like a little learning, may be a dangerous thing."

A low ripple of laughter came from the courtiers who had heard Henry's reply. He spoke English, intending to give the king a

hint that a subject of King George of England had been kidnaped. His name, Churchill, was more than a hint of his nationality. The thought would hold terror for this rough old king, and might be of use to Henry later on.

King Frederick William, who loved a spicy epigram tinged with wisdom, looked at Fritz Henry with the expression of a bated bull, but if the young man's flattery had alarmed the king, the blunt speech reassured him. Desiring to avoid further public conversation with the new recruit, the king said:

"I'll see you at the barracks in half an hour, and talk the matter over."

Henry bowed, took several steps backward from the king, and stopped beside the man who had conducted him to the palace. His Majesty turned toward the prime minister, Grumkow, and spoke in undertones:

"I believe the fellow is English. If King George knew that I had kidnaped him, we might find ourselves in serious trouble. I have hardly patched up the last incident of that kind. Come with me, Grumkow! Let us go to the barracks and talk with this man. He's a fine, big fellow, and I want to keep him if I can, but I don't want to have Hannover and England swarming about my ears on his account."

Then he stepped up to Fritz Henry, saying: "Come, my man. Come with Grumkow and me, and we'll see if we can find a commission for you."

His Majesty unceremoniously started to leave the audience chamber, regardless of unfinished business, for in the king's mind no affair of state could equal in importance the acquisition of a new Grenadier.

Grumkow indicated to Fritz Henry that he should follow the king, but the king and his minister were detained by an importunate courtier, and Henry waited until the business was over. While he was waiting, the Margrave of Schwedt approached.

"Did you see me with the princess?" asked Adolph. "My wit, my wit! I tell you it will win for me, even though the princess is still betrothed to Prince Frederick of England. She has been most gracious to me all morning, and I am very happy. If I had your stature and face there would be no great credit in winning her, but to win her with all my—my peculiarities will be an accomplishment worthy of a genius. Did you see the princess looking at you?"

"I thought her back was turned toward me most of the time," said Fritz Henry.

"That is true," answered Adolph, "but she could see you in a mirror. Never grieve, my man, because a woman turns her back on you. She may be watching you in a mirror. Never rejoice when she turns her face toward you; she may be looking at another man over your shoulder. The princess looked at you in the mirror and over my shoulder. Lucky dog! If you were of high degree, by Heaven, I'd run you through!"

"In that case, I'm glad I am of low degree," answered Fritz Henry, laughing. "Good-bye, Margrave. I hope to see you again."

Henry nodded to his friend, and in obedience to Grumkow's gesture, followed the minister and the king. When in the street, the king fell back with him and said:

"Tell me, young man, are you English? You speak the tongue as well as my Mina speaks it."

"If your Majesty insists on knowing who and what I am, I shall answer your question," returned Fritz Henry. "But if I am English, the time may soon come when you will be glad to be able to answer King George's questions honestly, and say you did not know that I was his subject when I joined the regiment. Perhaps I had better say to you that I am not English, even though it may be I do not tell the

exact truth. If I am an English subject, your Majesty does not want to know it unless you wish to send me home."

Henry was in high spirits, and seemed perfectly willing that hard old Prussian Majesty should know he was laughing at him. The king walked beside Fritz Henry for several minutes, gesticulating and muttering, undetermined how to meet this unprecedented attack on his dignity. To do the king justice, dignity gave him less trouble than any other of his kingly attributes. He was always willing to sacrifice it for a substantial benefit, and of all substantial benefits that could come to him, a six-foot Grenadier was the most cherished.

The king loved his daughter Don't Care because she did not fear him. Like all violent bullies, he despised those who cringed before him, and respected those who defied him and insisted that they, as well as he, had a right to live.

At first Henry's language irritated the king, but he could not long remain angry at a man who was about to do him the great favor of voluntarily entering his Grenadier Regiment. So he soon began to admire the boldness behind Henry's words, and after a great deal of mut-

tering and gesticulating, turned to the young man.

"You have more brains than Grumkow, and are as brave as Don't Care. I have more need of you in my council than in my regiment, and may use you in both. Come to me, Grumkow," said the king, calling to the minister, who was walking ahead. Grumkow went back to his Majesty.

"Pay that fool," said the king, pointing to the French recruiting officer. "Tell him to go to Spandau, and to say nothing of this affair unless he wants to hang. This young man," indicating Henry, "is free to go when or where he will, or if he desires to enlist in the regiment, see that he has an opportunity. Which shall it be, young man?"

"If your Majesty will give me a commission, I'll enlist," answered Henry.

"Can you drill a company?" asked the king.

"Try me," responded Henry.

"Devils in hell, answer my question!" stormed the king, glaring furiously at his new recruit. Henry paid no attention to the king's anger, but answered smilingly, calmly:

"I have answered your Majesty."

"You have not!" shouted the king.

"If I tell you I can drill a company, will your

Majesty be any wiser?" asked Henry. "Men are apt to lie in their own interests, and the King of Prussia would not take my word in this instance."

"*Himmel!* I say, can you drill a company?" demanded the king, stamping his foot and striking his cane violently on the pavement.

"Again I say, try me," answered Henry. "If I were to tell you I can drill a company, and should fail, your Majesty would despise me. There is but one way to answer your question, and that is by showing you what I can do."

After watching Henry's face for a moment, the king turned to Grumkow, saying, "Tell Seckendorf to bring out a company of the regiment. Send for that rascal Fritz, and we'll let him see this fellow try. Try, try, try," growled the king. "He seems to know but one word—'try'."

"It's a good word to know, your Majesty," answered Fritz Henry, smiling. "The King of Prussia knows it better than any man in the world, and the man who knows it will soon or late come to know another word—success."

The old king's hard face seemed to soften, if anything so hard as Frederick William's face

could be said ever to soften, and he turned to Grumkow, muttering slowly:

"Never mind about the company, Grumkow. Tell Seckendorf to make this man a captain of Grenadiers. If there is no company for him now, we'll soon make one, and we'll keep him in the palace until we do have one for him."

"I am surprised," interrupted Henry, who felt sure of his ground, and wanted to play his cards for all they were worth, "that your Majesty should be caught by a trick of words, and I hope you will prove me before you give me a commission."

"*Ach!* God has sent me a stubborn devil," mumbled the king, far from bad-humoredly. "Nothing that we do suits him, but—but he is right. A man is a fool to be caught by a trick of words. Send for Fritz. Get out the company, Grumkow. I wish that rascally son of mine had half this fellow's stubbornness. Stubbornness is a blessed virtue. Get out the company and send for that rascal Fritz."

Frederick William, the most stubborn man ever born of woman, stormed at other stubborn men, but in his heart he loved them. The Crown Prince Fritz, his son and heir, was a dainty little gentleman who loved fine dress, music and books, and for that reason the old

king hated him. Frederick William loved resistance, and there was none in Prince Fritz. In fact, there was little resistance anywhere for Prussian Majesty save in his wife, Queen Sophia, and that almost drove Majesty wild.

The king, who was gouty, took Henry's arm as they walked toward the parade ground. Majesty had never before been known to lean on any man. Stubbornness would walk alone or fall, and the little act of taking Henry's arm was a sure harbinger of favor for our kidnaped prince.

Under Frederick William's cloak, Fritz Henry felt that he had found a safe hiding place from the lady of Saxony. When his fortunes should be settled, he would write to his father, telling of his adventures, but for the present he would hold communication with no one in Bayreuth.

Soon the king, Grumkow and Fritz Henry reached the parade ground. Ten minutes later a company of Grenadiers came marching out and halted in front of their master.

"That rascal Fritz is late," growled the king. "Late, late, as usual. There is no hope for a man who is always late."

After the king had waited ten minutes, Prince Fritz came up and saluted his father respect-

The old man shook his cane and growled savagely

fully. The father gazed at the son angrily for a moment, and said:

"Take off those gloves—silk—silk—by the devil, silk! French gewgaws! Take off those gloves, I say!" The old man shook his cane in close proximity to his son's head, and growled savagely.

Fritz took off the gloves.

"Now throw them to the ground!" cried the king. Fritz tossed the gloves to the ground.

"Not there, not there, you popinjay—here, in the mud! Take them up and throw them in the mud!"

Prince Fritz obeyed and stubborn Majesty walked through the mud, trampling the silk gloves with his heavy, hob-nailed boots, and glaring at the culprit.

"I want him to meet this man," said the king, addressing Grumkow.

Thus did Prince Henry of Bayreuth meet the future Frederick the Great.

"May I know your name?" asked the Crown Prince, stepping toward Henry and offering his hand.

"My name is Frederick Henry Churchill, your Highness," answered our friend, bowing to the heir to the Prussian throne.

"You are to watch this man drill a company

of your regiment," said the king, turning to Prince Fritz. "I want you to cast off your worthless friends, and take this young man for your associate. He may put a little stubbornness into you."

"Yes, your Majesty," answered Prince Fritz, humbly; but he already hated Henry because the king liked him.

An entire failure on the part of father and son to understand each other had engendered a bitter hatred that lasted as long as Frederick William lived. Perhaps, on the Crown Prince's part, it lasted long after his father's death.

At the king's command, Fritz Henry took the company through the maneuvers of the parade ground. When the drill was finished, the old king was delighted, for the new recruit had taught the Grenadiers several new movements.

Turning to Grumkow, who seemed to be not only prime minister, but also major domo of the palace, the king said:

"Cause this man's commission to be made out at once, and have him lodged in the palace. We need a page near us with brains and honesty—one who can and will serve us faithfully. If the fellow fails us we will hang him. Tell that rascally son of mine to go to his apart-

ments and to take the new captain with him for the present."

The king rarely spoke directly to Fritz, and not the least irritating of his father's many methods of wounding him was this roundabout manner of speaking to him through another.

When Henry and the prince started toward the palace, Henry easily discovered that he was not in favor. That unpleasant fact, he believed, was owing to the king's gracious introduction. He liked Prince Fritz and determined not to be repulsed by the young fellow until his Royal Highness had an opportunity to know him and to judge him for himself. Henry spoke at times as they walked along, but the surly Crown Prince answered only in monosyllables.

After entering the palace, they passed through several rooms, Henry being allowed to follow unheeded by his conductor. Presently they entered a room where ladies and gentlemen were assembled by twos and threes, talking and laughing. Henry recognized none of those present save the Princess Wilhelmina and the Margrave of Schwedt. Prince Fritz unceremoniously left his companion, went to the Princess Wilhelmina, and took her hand affectionately. The princess beamed on her brother

and any one seeing them together could easily discover the great love between them. The Margrave nodded to Fritz Henry, and sent him a broad, massive smile. The princess glanced quickly, but with evident kindness, toward the door and turned her face away. After she had talked with her brother for a moment, she looked scornfully toward the door and turned her back on her brother's recent companion.

Presently the Margrave went to Henry and began singing Wilhelmina's praise. There was not her like in all the world, was the Margrave's theme, and he was right if all the world that knew her is to be believed. There seems to be but one verdict concerning her. Excepting her father, every one deemed her of faultless beauty in all respects. The king seemed to regard her and Fritz with an unnatural hatred.

"But I'm sorry for you," continued the talkative Margrave.

"Why?" asked Henry.

"You have fallen sadly out of favor with her Highness," answered Adolph.

"How can that be," asked Henry, "since I have not yet had the pleasure of a presentation? I cannot understand how I can be either in or out of favor with her Highness."

"You certainly were in favor with her," said

the Margrave. "Greatly in favor. She spoke about you when you entered the room with the Crown Prince a moment since and said: 'Ah, Schwedt, there is your handsome friend, the new Grenadier.' "

"That, indeed, was kind in her Highness," responded Henry.

"But the Crown Prince upset all her kindness by telling her that you had found favor with the king, and that his Majesty had forced you on him as a companion. The king's favor is a sure harbinger of disfavor with the Princess Mina and the Crown Prince Fritz."

"I can live under their frowns," said Fritz Henry, "and her Highness may grant me her favor when I ask it."

Henry knew that his words would reach the ears of the princess, nor did he care how soon.

Presently the Margrave rejoined the princess, but hastened back to his friend at the door to tell him that the Crown Prince was about to go to his apartments, and that if Captain Henry —as the Margrave called his new friend— wished, in obedience to the king's command, to accompany his Royal Highness, he should follow at his will.

When the prince started toward the door on the opposite side of the room, Fritz Henry

reluctantly followed, more amused than chagrined at the humiliating position in which he, a royal prince, found himself. The humor of the situation and the chance for adventure had a strong appeal for him, and neither the slight put upon him by the Crown Prince nor the scorn of the princess could wound him until he felt sure that their dislike had fallen on him for personal reasons. As yet, this was not true; he believed it was their father's favor to him that caused their aversion.

CHAPTER VI

LITTLE PRINCE FRITZ

When the Crown Prince and Henry entered the prince's apartments, the little fellow changed his rough military coat for a silk dressing gown, took a book from a shelf, seated himself in a window and began to read. Henry went to another window overlooking the palace gardens, and for a time was halting between pity for the Crown Prince and an inclination to be angry.

But little Fritz seemed to be such a forlorn young prince, stranded on the stormy reef of his father's unnatural hatred, that Henry's anger soon gave way to sympathy. Presently two pages of the court entered the room and began a conversation with the Crown Prince. They talked at first in undertones, but once in a while Fritz Henry caught the king's name linked with the words "damned old Stumpy", "old brute", "old tyrant".

The Crown Prince addressed one of the pages as Keith and the other as Katt, though which was Katt and which was Keith, Henry did not know, as the Crown Prince did not present

them. Soon the conversation became louder and grew excited in tone. Oaths—French, German and English—fell rapidly from the lips of the three friends, and were frequently associated with the name "Old Stumpy". After a few minutes the Crown Prince and the pages seemed to care nothing for Henry's presence, and spoke aloud, regardless of what he might hear.

"Stumpy says they must go," said one of the young men. "The harpsichord, violin and flute all must go, and a bonfire shall be made of them on the parade ground. Kate Sonnsfeld told me that Stumpy swears he will beat you with his stick in public, and will imprison you for a month in the dungeons of Spandau Castle, on bread and water, if he catches you playing on either the harpsichord, flute or violin."

"I'll play when I choose," said the Crown Prince, showing great spirit in the absence of his father.

"Ah, but you must not," pleaded one of the pages. "Your father seems to be insane on the subject of your music. He does not object to music in others, so it must be the pleasure it gives you that hurts him."

"But I *will* play. I'll play now," said the

prince, who, in a small way, had his father's stubbornness without his force.

"But your father may come," insisted Katt. "You know he is always slipping around and surprising you at unexpected moments. Judging from the violence of his recent outburst, I should not be surprised to see him try to kill you with his own hand, if he came suddenly into the room and found you playing. I believe the king's hatred of you and Mina has driven him mad."

"I'll play anyway," said the Crown Prince. "I wish he would come in and kill me."

The prince seated himself at the harpsichord and began playing a selection from Handel's "Rinaldo". He had been playing perhaps five minutes, when a heavy footfall and the thump, thump, thump of a rattan cane were heard just outside the door of the room. The sounds of the footfall and the cane were too familiar and too terrifying to every member of the court of Berlin not to be known when heard, so they brought terror to the Crown Prince and his friends. One of the young men quickly drew the prince away from the harpsichord.

"The king! The king!" he cried. "For God's sake, Fritz—"

But it was too late. The footfall, the cane

and the ominous, angry growl were just outside the door. Henry turned toward the Crown Prince and saw the pale young face distorted by fear. He had just moved away from the harpsichord, but every one in the room knew he had risen too late, for the offensive notes certainly had fallen on the ears of irate Prussian Majesty, and the royal fury could be heard with appalling distinctness. The knob of the door had just begun to turn. The prince was standing by the bench before the harpsichord, and a frightful scene was imminent. Henry sprang to the harpsichord, took the seat Fritz had vacated, and caught up the theme of Handel's beautiful melody just where the Crown Prince had left off twenty seconds before. At the same instant the door opened and in walked the furious king.

Henry continued playing, seemingly so interested in the music that he did not know of his Majesty's presence. When the king saw that it was the new captain at the harpsichord, his lifted cane came softly to the floor, and he stood listening to the rare, sweet strains.

"Pardon me," said the prince, laying his hand on Henry's shoulder. "Music is offensive to his Majesty. I fear you do not know he is in the room."

Henry sprang to his feet, gave a stiff, military salute, and said:

"I crave your Majesty's pardon. I did not know you had entered the room, nor did I know that you objected to music. I should not have dared to accuse your Majesty of so grave a sin."

"I don't object to it. Go on! Go on!" cried the king, much to every one's astonishment. "I'm not so great an idiot as to hate music if it is of the right kind and doesn't rob a young man of his senses. I like your music. If my worthless son would play that sort of music as you play it, I should not object, but his miserable French dances drive me mad. They are not for men; they are for French courtesans."

Fritz Henry had conquered this stubborn king, accomplishing the extraordinary feat within half a day by using the king's own methods, softened and sweetened to suit the occasion. Henry was careful always to make the king feel that nothing Prussian Majesty did was exactly right, but he administered his corrective doses in such sugar-coated diminutive pills that the king felt the curative effect only and did not realize that he was being drugged.

"Go on! Play, play! Why do you stop?"

said the king, evidently indignant that any one should accuse him of disliking good music, though he had frequently declared his hatred of it in stormy outbursts.

Henry played, and hard, half-mad Prussian Majesty listened, standing defiantly in the middle of the room and refusing to sit in the presence of his despised son. After playing for a few minutes, Henry rose, and the king walked deliberately away, leaving the astonished group staring at each other in open-eyed wonder.

When the king left, Henry went back to the window where he had been standing. The Crown Prince cast several glances in his direction, and then went over to him.

"I beg your pardon," said he, speaking English, "and I want you to do me the great honor of giving me your hand."

"I'll gladly give you my hand," answered Henry, "but I have nothing to pardon in your Highness."

"You have, indeed," insisted the Crown Prince. "I have treated you discourteously without the slightest cause, but my apology shall not be in words. From this hour my effort shall be to make amends, if you can find it in your heart to overlook my rudeness. These

are my friends. This is Lieutenant Katt, and this, Keith. Each, you see, is over six feet tall, so you may know they are in my regiment, the Grenadiers."

Henry acknowledged the introduction, and the Crown Prince continued:

"There is one other person whom I want you to know—my sister. I have but three friends in the world—Katt, Keith and Mina. Before I present you to my sister, I want to tell her of the mistake I made in speaking unkindly of you. I foolishly allowed my father's favor to turn me against you. I'll go to my sister at once. She will thank you quite as warmly as I do for the timely help you gave me to-day. I assure you it will never be forgotten by either of us."

The Crown Prince threw his dressing gown to the floor, donned his military coat, and ran impetuously to tell his sister of the incident at the harpsichord.

When the prince had left the room, Katt turned to Fritz Henry and asked: "You are newly arrived at court?"

Katt was a fine, manly young fellow, whose face and manner were frank and engaging.

"I was never in Berlin until last night," answered Fritz Henry.

"You doubtless have seen enough to convince you that a sad state of affairs exists in the palace," said Katt. "The king cruelly hates Prince Frederick and the Princess Wilhelmina, though there is no cause for it save the machinations of Grumkow. Every one at court except his Majesty knows that Grumkow and Seckendorf are here in the interest of Austria, and desire the prince's death, but the king is so stubborn and violent that no one would dare to tell him the truth. He would not believe it from the lips of an angel from heaven.

"I predict that the Crown Prince will meet his death on the scaffold unless it is prevented by an uprising of the Prussian people. If Grumkow fails in his purpose to bring the Crown Prince to the block, I believe the old devil will have him assassinated. I tell you, the life of our prince is in hourly peril. In case of his death, the Princess Mina will be forced to marry the Margrave of Schwedt, and the old king's days will be numbered, for he, too, will fall a victim to Grumkow. When the old king dies, Schwedt will become king in name, but Brandenburg and Prussia will, in fact, fall into the lap of Austria."

"I can't help believing that you are wrong," said Keith. "A terrible state of affairs exists,

but I don't believe that all you say is true. While poor Schwedt is madly in love with the princess, and desires above all things to marry her, he is an honest fellow at heart, and more of a man than you would believe. If you knew him as well as I do, you would agree with me that he has the soul of a gentleman, and the tender, kindly heart of a child. Not all the crowns of Europe would induce the Margrave of Schwedt to be a party to the frightful plot your imagination has conjured up."

"Of course not!" cried Katt. "Do you suppose Grumkow would entrust Schwedt with knowledge of his plans? He is but his tool, and as he is madly in love with the princess, you will know one of these fine days that I have just uttered a true prophecy. Mina will fall into his arms, and I pray to God she may die before the hour comes."

"You may be right," answered Keith, "but bad as Grumkow is, I can hardly believe a heart really beats that is bad enough to hatch so hellish a plot. Surely there is no heart so evil as to work upon the half-mad brain of our king for the purpose of inducing him to kill his own son."

"I tell you, Keith," answered Katt, who was growing excited; "I tell you, Grumkow would

murder his own mother, or strangle his own child to put money in his purse or to gain power. He has already caused the death of scores of innocent men who have stood in his way, and his career of murder has hardly begun."

Katt trembled with excitement. His face was flushed and his eyes glared wildly as if with a touch of madness. He stood gazing vacantly at the ceiling, his hands clinched and his arms outstretched.

"I do not want to be a prophet of evil," he continued, "but I tell you the heart of the future seems bare to me at this moment. You and I, Keith—Fritz's best friends—will be Grumkow's first victims. I shall die first. I can see my head on the block! Your fate is not clear, but there is trouble ahead for you. Fritz will be shot by a company of his own regiment, and Mina will be saved for Schwedt. The queen will follow Fritz and me. Then poor old Stumpy will go the way of all flesh, and Grumkow will be the real king of Prussia."

Henry stood aghast at this frightful prophecy, and was half inclined to believe that Katt was drunk. Keith stared in wonder for a moment, and said:

"Katt, you freeze my blood!" Then covering his face with his hands, he sank into a chair.

Katt stood as if in a trance. Henry placed his hand on his shoulder and spoke to him gently.

"Your fear for those you love has so wrought upon you that you magnify the danger. When you become calm, your forebodings will pass away."

"Perhaps you are right," said Katt, relaxing and seating himself on the window sill. "I must be insane, but upon my word, I thought I saw my own head drop from my body, and I seemed to see the Crown Prince blindfolded to be shot. But I suppose, as you say, it was my imagination, overheated by recent events and frenzied by fear. I have been drinking too much. I am crazed by the king's cruelty to his daughter, his son and their friends. I tell you, it is as much as a man's life is worth to be known as the Crown Prince's friend. If it were not for Fritz and Mina, sweet, tender, beautiful Mina, I would not remain at court one hour."

Katt rose to his feet, looked vacantly out the window for a moment, and said as if speaking to himself:

"Ah, yes, Mina, Mina! *Gott im Himmel!*

What will become of her? Dearly as I love her, I wish she could die." Henry raised his hand in protest, but Katt did not allow him to speak. "Yes, yes!" he cried, excitedly. "I love the princess with every drop of my blood. Each spot of earth her foot touches is hallowed and sacred to me. I have no thought of a like return from her heart, though I know she loves me almost as dearly as if I were her brother. But I tell you, friends, she had better die than live."

"Is she not betrothed to the Prince of Wales?" asked Fritz Henry.

"I suppose a betrothal does exist," replied Katt; "but Grumkow will never allow it to go further. In my opinion, it will soon be repudiated, and then the Margrave of Schwedt, or Grumkow's other tool, the Duke of Weissenfels, will receive this angel. The thought maddens me. Mina could not endure life for one month as the wife of either of these men."

"Weissenfels?" asked Henry, in surprise. "I had not heard of him as a suitor for her hand. He is old enough to be her grandfather, poor enough to beg crumbs from her hand, and vile enough to contaminate the atmosphere for miles around him."

"He's the blackest villain unhung," muttered

Katt; "the blackest save Grumkow. I can put no man ahead of *him* for villainy."

Katt had hardly finished speaking when Fritz returned. Grasping Henry by the arm, he said, joyfully:

"Come with me. I want my sister to know you."

"Have you the king's permission to present me to your sister and the queen?" asked Henry.

"I have not taken the trouble to ask it," answered Prince Fritz. "Were I to speak unbidden to my father on that or any other subject, he would strike me with his cane. But I shall present you to my mother also if she is with my sister."

"I am a stranger," suggested Henry, "and your Highness does not know that I am worthy of the honor."

Henry felt that he was right in cautioning the prince, but back of his words was a reluctance to be presented to the queen and the princess save by order of the king. The new captain of Grenadiers did not wish to be embroiled in the bitter war that was raging between the prince, the princess and the queen on one side and the king and Grumkow on the other. To steer a clear course between these factions would require all the tact and caution

at his command. A man took his life in his hands when he entered the court of Berlin at that time.

"Here at this court, we are not so void of beams in our own eyes that we search too carefully for the mote in others," answered the prince with a sneering smile. "Knowing our own faults, we are not in any way particular whom our women meet. Most of the men about the court are ruffians, swindlers and adventurers. Many of them are spies, and the king is the dupe of all. What my mother, my sister and I need is friends, and a new recruit to our cause will be as welcome to the queen and to my sister as he is to me, even though all we know of him is that his name is Captain Churchill, and that he is nimble of wit and quick to act. Your readiness in taking my place at the harpsichord is all the introduction you need. My sister will be delighted to hear you play. We have no musician at court that can compare with you. Your performance on the harpsichord to-day was the most delightful music I ever heard, and the most profitable to me."

Fritz's remark concerning the new recruit to his cause emphasized Henry's conviction that it would be safer not to meet the queen and the princess until the king saw fit to present him.

The king's introduction might not be the shortest road to their favor, but it was surely the safest, and Henry trusted in his ability to win their good opinion later on by convincing them that he was really their friend.

He was seeking an excuse to decline the prince's offer when an interruption saved him the trouble. There was a knock at the door; an officer entered the room, saluted his colonel, Prince Fritz, and said:

"His Majesty commands Captain Churchill's attendance at the barracks, and I am to have the honor of conducting him."

The Crown Prince turned pale as he asked: "Do you know what the king wants with Captain Churchill?"

"I do not know, your Highness," answered the officer.

"I hope the harpsichord has not brought you into trouble," said Katt, whose experience with the king had caused him to fear his Majesty in every aspect.

Henry immediately departed with the officer, leaving his three friends in a state of wondering alarm. Their fears, however, were groundless. The king had sent for his new recruit to give him a commission and to clothe him in the regimental uniform. His Majesty kept these

uncouth Grenadier uniforms on hand, always ready. If a Grenadier died, the king tucked the uniform carefully away to await the man who was to fill the vacant place. If the coat did not fit, it was a pity, for the sake of both the coat and the man, but if by stretching a garment a little here, or by taking it in a little or a great deal there, it could be made to do its duty even poorly, the new man wore it and had no alternative. Fortunately, a new and fairly well fitting uniform fell to Fritz Henry's lot.

The king's delight in his Grenadier Regiment was so keen that he personally superintended the fitting of each uniform.

When Henry arrived at the barracks, the king was present to deliver the commission in person, to pass upon the fit of the uniform, and to gloat over a new six-footer added to his ranks. A six-footer who was capable of being an officer was of extraordinary value in Frederick William's estimation.

After examining the uniform which the tailor had adjusted, the king said:

"Ah, it fits you beautifully, and I hope you will wear it always. That rascal Fritz discards his uniform on all possible occasions. He wants to deck himself out with laces, frills, gold buttons and French finery. I wear the uniform

of my Grenadiers, and what is good enough for me should be good enough for my son and for my soldiers."

"I shall be very glad to wear the uniform, your Majesty," returned Henry.

The new captain was told that he should not take charge of a company until a few more recruits were added to the regiment, although he might frequently be called on to drill the troops. King August of Saxony had promised to deliver to Prussian Majesty ten men more than six feet high. The Czar of Russia had promised to send a present of ten more. The Margrave of Schwedt had agreed to deliver five, so King Frederick William told Fritz Henry that a new company would soon be ready for him.

"Perhaps you know of a good, tall fellow who would like to join the regiment?" asked the king, with a miserly gleam in his eyes.

"I know of no tall man that you could get," answered Henry.

"If you know of any tall man, tell us where he is to be found, and we will try to get him," said the king, examining Henry's uniform, and smoothing the wrinkles with a loving hand.

"There is the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth,

who is over six feet tall. Your Majesty might kidnap—"

"*Ach!* Don't be a fool!" growled the king.

The officers standing near by looked at each other in wonder, for stubborn, growling Prussian Majesty had been twitted for the first time in all his life. The king took no offense at Fritz Henry's words, but continued to give instructions concerning slight changes to be made in the uniform.

"If you prove yourself a worthy officer," said the king, still smoothing wrinkles in the back of Henry's coat, "we may some day invite you to our Tobacco Parliament. You have a quick wit, a fearless tongue, and more wisdom than I have ever found in the head of a stupid Englishman—that is, of course, you're not English."

The Tobacco Parliament was a nightly gathering of the king's chosen friends, where tobacco and beer were consumed in great quantities, and where all the gossip of the court and the city was discussed. No subject was too small nor too great for serious discussion and open consideration in "The Tabagie," as the Tobacco Parliament was called. No qualification of birth, rank, education or social standing was necessary to gain admission to this inner circle of the court life of Berlin and Potsdam.

The most errant vagabond, the veriest adventurer, the greatest charlatan might, and often did, obtain a seat in The Tabagie. In truth, one need not be a gentleman, need have no shred of reputation, no touch of virtue to get a foothold in the palace of this half-mad old Frederick William. All that was needed was to coddle the king's whims, abuse the Crown Prince, and damn the king of England.

Henry was a stranger, but his instantaneous rise to favor was not a surprise to any one but himself. He might as easily fall, and of that ominous fact he was fully aware. This history will tell you whether he rose or fell.

CHAPTER VII

THE TORRENT OR THE TIDE?

One evening not long after Henry received his uniform, the king invited him to the queen's drawing room and presented him to her Majesty and to the young Princess Charlotte, nicknamed by the royal family "Mam'selle Don't Care". She was the one person who dared express her mind to the king, and he loved her better than he loved all the rest of his family. Recently another had arisen who did not fear his Majesty, and the king respected him accordingly.

Don't Care was a little beauty of seventeen. Fritz Henry was a big, handsome fellow of twenty-six, and immediately the eyes of Don't Care disclosed the fact that she *did* care. Though a modest man, Henry had seen enough of the feminine world to know when a woman was making eyes at him, and Don't Care's glances told him their story very quickly.

The eyes were very attractive; the fair, rosy skin was very pleasing; the red, moist lips, with their cluster of dimples and their array of gleaming little teeth were very enticing. But

standing at the other side of the room was a fair, beautiful girl, whose calm, pale face wore an expression of sadness, and whose wonderful gray eyes told of depths in which lay a wealth of love, tenderness and truth that would enrich a man beyond the dream of avarice. To the girl with the marvelous gray eyes and the fair, sad face, the king did not present his guest; an omission for which neither the showy charms nor the effusive graciousness of Don't Care in any way compensated.

The Princess Mina did not turn her back on Henry this time, but spoke to her brother, who was standing near. After Henry had made his bow to the queen, he was presented to Don't Care and stopped beside her. Presently the Crown Prince came to him and said:

"The king will leave in a few minutes for The Tabagie, and when he goes I want to present you to my sister."

The prince returned to Wilhelmina, and Don't Care said, laughing:

"Fritz means Sister Mina. He always means her when he says 'my sister'. When he speaks of me he says 'Don't Care'." The girl laughed softly, shrugged her white shoulders, and continued: "He and Mina are jealous because my father loves me best."

Henry could find no suitable reply to Don't Care's remark, so he remained silent for a moment and turned his face toward the king, who was moving in the direction of the door.

"Now Fritz will soon return," said Don't Care, "and carry you off to his 'sister'. Then I'll see you no more. If once Mina gets her clutches on a man, I and all the other ladies may as well cry quits."

"The Princess Wilhelmina is certainly very beautiful," said Henry, "but—but—pardon me, your Highness, too, is most amply equipped to make other ladies 'cry quits'."

"I don't know what she does to men," said the girl, shrugging her shoulders and shaking her head dolefully, "but in some way she captures them all and manages to hold them. She opens her big gray eyes, and I suppose makes men pity her. Men are so gullible. If a woman cries 'help, help!' they believe in her wail and at once try to comfort her."

"The Princess Wilhelmina surely needs no man's pity," answered Henry, almost in a reverie. "She is above the ordinary sorrows of life."

"No one is above the ordinary sorrows of life," answered Don't Care. "But Mina's troubles are of her own making. She has ogled

so many men that all the marriageable world seems to want to marry her."

Don't Care's words irritated Henry, but he laughed and answered:

"I should suppose that to be a source of happiness."

"Not in Mina's case," responded Don't Care. "The men who want to marry her would frighten a hag, and it seems that after she wins them she hates them; so she is unhappy. When very young she was betrothed to our cousin, Prince Frederick of England, but when he came to see her, she took so great a dislike to him that now she is wretched at the thought of marrying him. He is madly in love with her great owl eyes and her pale face, but he is a fool and I told him as much. I think, however, there is little chance of the marriage ever taking place. Father wants to get rid of her, and is eager to marry her to any one who will have her, but I doubt if he ever consents to the English marriage. The handsome, gallant creature standing by her side, the Margrave of Schwedt, will probably be the lucky man, for I am sure father will soon send Prince Frederick and King George about their business."

Don't Care's words troubled Henry, for the vision of the Margrave of Schwedt, and still

worse, the image of the Duke of Weissenfels, came before his mind, and he saw the sad, sweet face and the wonderful gray eyes linked with misery and woe.

"I hope that no such fate is in store for your sister," said Henry. "She would probably be unhappy if married to the man to whom she is talking."

"Why should she be unhappy?" asked Don't Care. "If she would not be content with him for a husband, why does she treat him so kindly? But she will have to take him even though she doesn't want him, if father wills it."

"Perhaps your sister's kindly heart prompts her to be kind to every one," returned Henry.

"Ah, I see you are caught already, though she has looked at you less than a dozen times."

"I have not noticed the princess conferring such an honor on me even once."

"Then you are duller than I think you are," retorted Don't Care, laughing softly. "But father has left the room, and here comes Fritz to take you away. Go! Don't Care doesn't care. Go to your fate." And that is exactly what Fritz Henry, the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, did then and there.

"Sister, this is the gentleman who plays Handel so beautifully," said the Crown Prince.

The princess offered her hand, and Henry, bowing low, kissed it.

"I hope I may soon hear you play," said the princess, lifting her great gray eyes to Henry's face.

"I shall be delighted to obey your Highness's command at any time," answered Henry.

"My request, not my command," returned the Princess Mina. "My brother has told me of your playing, and I would not command—"

"She will not command is what she means," interrupted our old friend, the Margrave of Schwedt. "Her Highness is too gentle and too kind to command, though her slightest wish has all the force of a royal edict. You must not forget what I told you, sir," continued the Margrave, speaking English. "There is no other like her."

The princess was annoyed at the uncouth flattery, and Fritz Henry was amused at the expression on the Margrave's face, which seemed to say: "Observe my wits at work."

Wilhelmina, desiring to change the subject, turned to Henry and said:

"I see that you speak English?"

"Yes," responded Henry.

"I am glad," she continued, speaking English. "One may converse more freely in a

tongue that is not understood by every one, and I like your language for its own sake." Evidently she was endeavoring to keep the conversation going until Adolph should leave, when she would speak what was in her mind. Presently the Margrave left, and the princess said, somewhat hurriedly:

"I want to thank you for your ready and generous help to my brother at the harpsichord."

"It was a very small thing, easily done," answered Henry.

"The thing itself was small," returned Wilhelmina, "but to think of it at the right time was great. You cannot know how great. It saved my brother, at least, a beating from the king's stick, and probably a month in the dungeons of Spandau Castle."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Henry. "I cannot believe that the king would inflict so great a punishment on your brother for so slight an offense, and I don't understand why playing the harpsichord should be an offense at all."

The princess looked at the floor, paused for a moment to suppress her evident emotion, and said, hesitatingly:

"You do not know what terrible things happen in this palace, nor can you dream of the

frightful fate that hangs over my brother and me, like the sword of Damocles." She stopped speaking because her voice was choked, but presently continued: "I should not speak of such things to a stranger, but—but since your kindness to my brother, I cannot help feeling and hoping that you are our friend. We need a friend, for saving Katt and Keith, whose friendship is stronger than their judgment, we have no friends in all the world. Even the queen, who loves us dearly, is constantly bringing trouble upon us." Again the princess paused to regain composure, but soon continued: "It seems that your days in Berlin have been days of triumph. You have accomplished the wonderful feat of winning my father and my brother, and I believe that in all the world there is not another man who could win both."

"I thank your Highness, and hope you are right in saying that I have won both the prince and the king," returned Henry.

"I do want to say," continued the princess, "that when you win my brother, you of course win me, and I am sure you will not in any way misunderstand me, but—" Again the princess paused. Henry remained silent, feeling that she had not finished speaking; "—but I am wondering if it is fair to allow you, who know

nothing of the perilous conditions here at court, to bear the dangerous burden of two such friendships. My father and my brother are as oil and fire, and between the two you will perish unless your judgment and discretion are greater than—than it seems possible any man's can be."

Again the princess paused, then spoke hesitatingly: "I suppose you do not care for my advice, and I cannot tell why I wish to warn you; but with all the need my brother and I have for your friendship, which, for some reason, I am ready to believe is true, I *do* advise you not to remain in Berlin unless you wish to take your stand on my father's side and against us. Great misfortune surely awaits us and all our friends. If you feel that the—the curse of our friendship is to fall on you, I urge you to leave Berlin without delay."

The princess finished speaking with difficulty. Her words fell so heavily on Henry's heart that, for the moment, he could not reply. Don't Care was right; Mina certainly made men pity her. One, at least, was completely carried off his feet by his yearning to help the rare, beautiful girl whose life was darkened by so much grief and trouble. Presently he answered in low, earnest tones:

"I hope affairs are not so bad as you fear, but if they were a thousand-fold worse, if my life were in hourly peril, I should remain for the sake of being near your Highness, to render what help I could in case of need."

The girl looked up to his face with surprise in her eyes. There was also gratitude, but she did not speak, and Henry continued:

"I had heard your praises sung long before I thought of coming to Berlin, but the song was a poor tribute to—to—"

"I supposed you had come to Berlin involuntarily," interrupted Mina, with evident desire to change the subject.

"You are right," answered Henry. "I and an old servant were surrounded by a company of rascals in the mountains while we were on a journey. There were six of them and two of us. I was unarmed, so I surrendered unconditionally. My servant was sent home—a long journey—to tell my father I had been captured by brigands, and I was carried off, having no knowledge of my destination. I did not know why I was seized until I met the Margrave of Schwedt at an inn a few miles from here. The Margrave—shrewder far than he appears to be—discovered the truth, and I learned from him that I was intended for the Grenadier

Regiment. All Europe, of course, has heard of your father's peculiar methods of recruiting for his favorite regiment. When I learned that Berlin was my destination, and that I had been kidnaped to make a Grenadier, I was relieved of all forebodings, because I knew I could at once obtain my release by telling your father my—my nationality."

Henry did not want to disclose his identity to the princess, but he felt that, in a way, he must follow up what he had said concerning himself, even though he should mislead her by an untruth; so he continued:

"Knowing that your father recently had trouble over kidnaping one of King George's subjects, I felt sure he would be only too glad to avoid another controversy, and was certain he would release me on demand."

The princess glanced swiftly at Henry's face. He thought she intended asking him if he was an Englishman, so wishing to prevent the question, he hurriedly continued:

"Before seeing the king and—and yourself in the Mirrored Chamber, I had made up my mind to refuse to enter the regiment, but after —after seeing you— A man's mind may take a very great leap in a very little moment, so

after—after seeing your Highness, I suddenly determined to remain."

Henry's manner was more significant than his words, though he, perhaps, was unconscious of it.

The princess lifted her eyes quickly to Henry's face, looked away from him, and said rather coldly:

"I fear you forget yourself."

"No, I do not. I have good right to say that it was you who kept me here, if what I say is true, and if I seek no reward save the happiness of serving you faithfully, you have no right to deny me the pleasure of offering my services. You need not fear that I shall misunderstand your graciousness, nor that I shall make a fool of myself by expecting reward for any service I may be so fortunate as to render. But I am glad to have this opportunity to tell you, for the first and last time, what—what it is right that you should know. When I prove false, I hope I may win your hatred. I do not ask your Highness to accept me on faith. I may be a mere adventurer, or may be false, but when I have proved myself, I hope you will give me my reward—the only reward I shall ask—your trust."

"I know you are not an adventurer," re-

turned the princess impulsively. "You have proved yourself to be a faithful friend to my brother, and I will meet your candor half way by telling you that I now take you on faith and without probation."

"I thank your Highness," answered Fritz Henry, "but if I am to help you and the Crown Prince, I must also have your father's favor, and if I have that, I fear you and your brother will doubt me."

A cloud came for a moment to the princess's face, but after a brief hesitancy, she said:

"You are right. A wise friend is a double friend. My brother and I have found so much duplicity in the hearts of men, and have been deceived so often by my father's friends who have pretended to be ours that we are naturally suspicious, but I feel sure that the hope of gain from Grumkow and my father would not induce you to be false to us."

"I shall make no grand promises," answered Fritz Henry. "What I do shall be my promise. If, apparently, I take my stand among those who wish evil to you and the Crown Prince, it will be because I can be of better help to you. Neither your father nor Grumkow has any favor to grant that could be of personal value to me. I have nothing to gain by remaining in

Berlin save the great pleasure of serving you."

The queen had been glancing with evident displeasure toward Wilhelmina and Henry, whose conversation had lasted too long to suit her Majesty, so he bowed and said:

"I hope your Highness will often give me the privilege of speech with you."

"It is a privilege that I shall seek for my own sake," replied the princess, lifting her eyes for a moment to Henry's face, and then looking to the floor.

"I beg to bid your Highness good-night," said Henry.

"Good-night."

Fritz Henry left the princess, spoke a word to the Crown Prince, talked for a moment with the Margrave of Schwedt, asked leave of the queen to withdraw, made his adieux and went to his bedroom, a garret near the apartments of Prince Fritz. Not far from Fritz Henry's bedroom were the wretched little pigeon-holes occupied by Katt and Keith, and near by was the room of the Margrave of Schwedt.

When the queen reached her bedroom that evening, she sent her maid, Ramen, to fetch Wilhelmina. When the princess arrived, her Majesty glared angrily at her, and said:

"You made a beautiful spectacle of yourself this evening."

"In what respect, mother?" asked Mina.

"You talked to your father's new creature for half an hour. With blushing and casting down your eyes, and looking up to his face, one would have thought you were a country maiden talking to her yokel in the lane."

"You talked to him, mother, and Don't Care talked to him longer than I did," answered Mina.

"She must have been timing all who talked to her handsome captain," suggested Don't Care.

"I timed nobody," said Mina. "I talked to the gentleman whom my father presented to you and whom my brother presented to me. No one else came near me, and while he remained at my side, I cannot see how I could have avoided talking to him, so I—I talked to him."

"Indeed, you *did* talk to him half the evening," retorted the queen. "I hear he has already found favor with Grumkow and the king, though he has been in Berlin only a few days. Perhaps he was brought here to spy upon your brother and me. For all you know, he may be here for the purpose of assassina-

ting the Crown Prince and abducting you."

"Mother, mother, you don't understand," said the Princess Mina. "This man is—is—"

The princess stopped speaking because she knew that the queen would repeat every word to Ramen. Mina also knew that Ramen was Grumkow's spy, though the queen could never be brought to believe it.

Ever since the birth of Wilhelmina, the queen's great desire had been for the marriage of the princess to Prince Frederick, the eldest son of her Majesty's brother, George II of England. Queen Sophia was a foolish, bad-tempered, though affectionate mother, and for some unaccountable reason, blamed Wilhelmina because the English marriage had not been concluded, though the princess had no more to do with it, pro or con, than she had to do with an eclipse of the moon.

Mina knew her English cousin and despised him, but she was well aware that her feeling in the matter would not be given even a passing thought by either of her parents, and the poor helpless girl was ready to meet her fate, whatever it might be. At twenty she was almost tired of life, and was resigned to be the victim of either her father, her mother, or both. Many marriages had been proposed by the king,

but the queen clung to one—that with England's prince.

Nearly all of the men Wilhelmina had met were repulsive in person and character. Up to the time of meeting Fritz Henry, she had spoken to but few men who were worthy to be accepted by her as friends, save two or three of her brother's associates, who were hardly more than boys. Fritz Henry had furnished a new standard by which she could measure men, and, in a way, had changed her opinion of the entire race. He had prompted a new thought in her mind, and had inspired a new impulse in her heart concerning that hitherto frightful nightmare, her future husband. She could not help thinking that if Prince Frederick of England were like this man, if the Margrave of Schwedt were of his pattern, or if any man seeking her hand were similar even in a small degree to this gentle spoken, handsome captain, life would have a very different hue, and the future would be as rosy as the morning's dawn.

All these new emotions in the breast of the Princess Mina found expression in tears that evening when she was alone with her friend and lady in waiting, Kate Sonnsfeld. While arranging the princess's toilet for the night, Sonnsfeld, who always spoke to Mina in Eng-

lish, though she spoke the language brokenly, had a great deal to say:

"Ah, Mina, I saw you talking to the Handsome Captain. That is the name your sister Charlotte gives him. Have I not often told you that all men are not to be hated?"

"You have often told me so," answered Mina, "but why do you tell me now?"

"Because, my Mina," returned Sonnsfeld; "the man you talked to this evening is not one to be hated; neither is he to be talked to too much unless my Mina would be unhappy. One could easily see by your face that he was not one to be hated by you. You looked happier and brighter than I have seen you in months, and that makes me happy. Yes, *liebling,* it makes me happy"

Sonnsfeld kissed Mina's bare shoulder, and continued: "No, no, dear one. All men are not to be hated. In truth, there are thousands of men who are to be loved by women as nothing else in all this world can be loved. A child's love for its parents is sweet and beautiful; a mother's love is deep and marvelous; but ah, Mina mine, if you take all the different kinds of love the human heart can give and roll them into one, and multiply their utmost strength a thousand-fold, you will still have only a small

part of that love which a woman may give to the man who is to be loved by her."

"If her love be right," suggested Mina.

"It matters not whether the world calls her love right or wrong," answered Kate, emphatically; "if she must love, she must; if it is her fate, she can in no way avoid it. It pulses in her breast with the first drop of blood that passes through her baby heart. It burns her in womanhood and is all of life that is left to her when death comes to give her rest. But the love—ah, Mina, it cannot die. It is God Himself. Some have naught of God in them. God must pity them, for their souls will rest forever in the earth. Some seem to have too much of God in them, and when that is true, life is apt to be a sweet torture."

"Why Sonnsfeld, what has come over you that you preach me this long sermon on love?" asked the princess.

"Because, Mina, you have God within your heart, and you will know all too soon why I preach to you if many times you talk to this Handsome Captain," answered Sonnsfeld.

After a long pause, the lady in waiting continued: "This love comes in so many ways. Sometimes it comes like the overlapping tide, ever encroaching upon the heart until it engulfs

it. But like the tide, it cannot be stemmed, and no man, much less woman, can stop, for a moment, its ebb or flow. Again it comes like a mountain torrent in flood, carrying all before it, and that sort of love sometimes brings death in its wake. I cannot tell which will come to you. I often fear it will be the mountain torrent. If you see much of the Handsome Captain, Mina, it will surely be the torrent or the tide."

Wilhelmina stretched forth her hand protestingly, and was about to speak. She tried to laugh, but ended by throwing herself on the bed, face downward, in a flood of tears. Mina feared that the tide had begun to flow, and she also feared that she would be powerless to say: "Thus far and no farther."

CHAPTER VIII

THE TOBACCO PARLIAMENT

At the Tobacco Parliament that evening was enacted a scene worth depicting, because of its bearing on the persons of whom this history treats, and because it was one of a multitude of similar scenes occurring during the reign of this half-mad stormy king.

Near the hour of seven o'clock, those who had been invited to the Tobacco Parliament began to drift into the long, low room in the north wing of the palace, where The Tabagie usually assembled. In this motley crew there were philosophers in rags and fools in uniform. There were old men, young men, sober men and drunken. They would all be more or less drunk before the Parliament adjourned, since no man had Frederick William's entire respect who was not capable of turning himself into a beer vat and walking home with the beer.

When the king arrived, he went to the head of the table, struck it a sounding blow with his cane, and the members of the Parliament scrambled into chairs, that is, those who could get them. Those who failed to secure chairs

stood against the wall. When the king was seated a lackey handed him a long-stemmed clay pipe and a large box of tobacco, from which he helped himself. Another lackey carried a box of ignited peat and offered the king a light. Candles and wax tapers were too expensive to suit the frugal taste of Prussian Majesty, so peat, which held fire well, was used for lighting pipes, notwithstanding its offensive smell.

On the king's right sat Grumkow. At the left of his Majesty was General Seckendorf. Near the center of the room, against the wall, stood our friend from Schwedt. Being clumsy and slow of movement, he had failed to get a chair.

Scattered about the room and seated at the table were a few men of some slight degree of virtue, but there were more of every degree of vice. Most of the members of The Tabagie were men who hoped to profit in some way by imposing upon the king's credulity, cajoling his prejudices, or pandering to his violent whims. One sure road to his favor was to abuse the Crown Prince, and to encourage the king in the belief that little Fritz was a traitor to his father, consequently to his country, and deserved to be beheaded as any other traitor. Many of the Tabagians were spies sent to Ber-

lin in the interest of other nations. No other monarch was ever so great a dupe as was this Frederick William, yet no other man ever accomplished as much as he by the sole use of the triple vices, stubbornness, violence and greed.

Another way to please his Majesty, when he was to be pleased at all, was to talk about his Grenadiers.

"I see your Majesty has a new recruit for the regiment," said a slim little minister of the Reformed Church, who sat next to Grumkow, and was anxious to introduce a pleasing topic of conversation.

Puff, puff—Majesty did not care to answer; even the Grenadier Regiment did not interest him. Something had gone wrong with Majesty. Silence ensued all along the line, Majesty not being ready to talk. After ten minutes of rapid puffing, during which the ceiling beams were nearly obscured in smoke, the king cried out:

"Tobacco!" A lackey sprang to his side with a box of tobacco from which he refilled his pipe. When other lackeys had helped the guests, the king shouted:

"Beer!" Then the stone mugs began to clink along the table. After the king had

emptied two or three stones or steins, as they were called, he delivered himself of one brilliant though incomplete sentence:

"Cold—" (A long pause; five or six puffs) "outside."

"Yes, yes! It is indeed very cold, your Majesty. Very, very cold, indeed. Yes, yes, very cold," said the little minister, eager to be the first to concur in his Majesty's opinion.

Majesty did not answer at once, but waited until he had thrown several clouds of smoke into the room, when he said:

"Nonsense. It's not very cold. It's just cold."

Majesty was not to be pleased.

"True, true, your Majesty," piped the little minister. "It is just cold—not very cold. I might say it is cold for this time of the year."

"It is not cold for this time of the year," replied the king. "But it is cold."

"Yes, yes, your Majesty, it is cold. Doubtless, your Majesty is right. It is not cold for this time of the year. It is, as your Majesty truly says, just cold." The little minister, like many another man, talked when he should have kept his mouth shut.

"I didn't say 'just cold'," growled the king.

"I thought your Majesty said—I understood your Majesty to say—"

Majesty glanced significantly at Grumkow, who unceremoniously thrust his elbow into the little minister's ribs, and the worthy parson had no further breath to waste.

A pause of several minutes ensued, broken only by the clanking of steins. Vast quantities of beer were rapidly disappearing, and soon many tongues would be loosened. The king talked little at these parliamentary sessions, but heard all that was said, and in a general way, directed the subjects of conversation.

This evening, several topics were introduced by a word from the king, and freely discussed by the members until his Majesty, growing tired of a particular subject, informed the parliamentarian then holding the floor, in polite though emphatic terms, that he was a fool. That epithet applied to a member while speaking was equivalent to a motion, put and carried, to lay the subject under discussion on the table.

It was easily noticeable, on this particular evening, that the king was in a bad humor. He glanced furtively at the door, and seemed to be expecting some one who did not come. A talkative member was discussing a subject that

had been introduced, when suddenly the king cried out:

"You are a fool!"

The member took his seat, and the subject under discussion was laid on the table. The king glared angrily about the room for a moment, and demanded:

"Where is that rascal, Fritz? Where is the blackguard? Did I not command him to come to The Tabagie this evening?"

"You did, indeed, your Majesty. You did!" answered Grumkow, sympathetically desirous of justifying the king's anger. "The Crown Prince is the most undutiful son I ever knew."

A murmur of assent rumbled through the room. The king, still glaring angrily, held his pipe in his hand and looked as if he would burst.

"In my opinion," said Grumkow, "the disobedience of the Crown Prince is treason to our king and to our country."

Cries of "True! True!" came from every throat save that of the Margrave of Schwedt. Nearly all of the members sprang to their feet, eager to flatter the king by abusing the Crown Prince. Many of them spoke at the same time, and grew eloquent in their denunciation of the crime, the treason, the black ingratitude exhib-

ited by the Crown Prince toward the kindest, gentlest, wisest and most indulgent of parents.

The Tabagie was getting drunk by leaps and bounds.

Again and again it was insisted that poor little Prince Fritz should suffer the punishment meted out to traitors for his crime in remaining away from The Tabagie. All expressed that opinion with sad, deep emphasis save our friend from Schwedt. In the midst of the hubbub he stole a chair from an enthusiastic member who had risen to deliver a tirade against the Crown Prince. The Margrave stood on the chair to lift himself above the heads of the crowd, and with violent gesticulations, screamed for recognition and begged permission to speak. When this was obtained and when silence again prevailed, he delivered himself of this blessed lie:

"Your Majesty and honorable gentlemen: I feel that I am to blame in this grievous matter, and my heart is heavy that all this abuse, though well meant, and coming from the hearts of those who love his Majesty, should fall unjustly on the innocent head of our noble Crown Prince. It should rest on my shoulders —mine, because of my failure to deliver the Crown Prince's message of deep regret that he was unable to come to The Tabagie this

evening, to participate in this most enjoyable occasion. This is an occasion made memorable, I would say, not only by the wit and learning of the wisest of kings, but by the wisdom and sagacity of—of—of those who—who—let me add—I would say—in addition, of those who—The Romans, your Majesty, delighted to hold meetings similar to this. The Spartans likewise, your Majesty, held their congregations in the Forum, and—"

"No, no, not the Forum," interrupted the little minister. "The Forum was at Rome."

"Sit down!" cried the king, glaring at the little man. "It is warm, I tell you! It is not cold! Sit down!"

The king, who was comfortably drunk, shook his stick at the little minister, and the discomfited parliamentarian sat down.

"Yes, your Majesty," continued Schwedt, waving his hand pityingly toward the little minister. "I assert that the Spartans met in the Forum, and I defy any man to disprove it." Adolph, whose beer was active within him, pressed his left hand on his breast, defiantly lifted his right on high, and continued, as if addressing the world at large: "Who was there—let me ask again—who was there that now is here, your Majesty? If I was not there,

if you were not there, if the gentlemen within the sound of my voice were not there, if no one that is now alive was there, have I not—again I ask—have I not as good a right as any other man to say that the Spartans held meetings similar to this in the Forum; that the Spartans—"

A Greek professor rose to his feet, took issue with the princely Margrave of Schwedt, and insisted with drunken earnestness that the Ptolemys built the Forum, and that the pyramids were the most remarkable structures in the world. Others joined in the wordy conflict, the subject of which soon got far afield, and Adolph, who had no message of any sort from Fritz, thought he had accomplished his purpose by turning the tide of discussion from Fritz's treason to the Forum, the Spartans, the pyramids and the rest of the ancient world.

The Margrave dropped out of the discussion, laughing softly to himself over the trick he had played the king and The Tabagie. But after a time, Grumkow, who was determined that the Crown Prince should not get off so easily, whispered a poisoned word to the king. Majesty called somebody a fool, Sparta and the pyramids were laid on the table, and Grumkow spoke sadly but earnestly:

"I should like to ask what message the princely Margrave of Schwedt has brought from the rebellious Crown Prince—if any. The most indulgent of fathers honors the most disobedient, most ungrateful of sons with a command to attend the meeting of this distinguished and honorable assembly. The son fails to obey. His Majesty rightly desires that the future king of Prussia shall not only learn wisdom at these meetings, but it is our gracious king's wish that the Crown Prince shall also learn the arts of smoking and drinking, that his brain may be strengthened by beer and hardened by tobacco."

"Hear! hear!" interrupted the Tabagians.

"Yes, friends, hardened by tobacco to the end that he may be able to govern this country in some faint degree with the wisdom of his great father. His disobedience to his father is treason to the king. His failure to come here and to acquire those qualities which will enable him to govern this country wisely and justly is treason to the people. Therefore I demand, in justice to his Majesty, as the right of this nation, and as the privilege of this assemblage, that the princely Margrave of Schwedt do now publicly deliver the Crown Prince's excuses, if any he has."

"Ah, gladly!" cried Adolph, speaking as if the moment were the most joyful of his life. "I would say—I wish to inform his Majesty—I wish to say—I am glad to—to—in truth, the Crown Prince is very ill, your Majesty. He had just donned his regimentals, and was happy at the prospect of a delightful evening to be spent with his gracious father, and with these wise, congenial spirits, when a sudden illness—a frightful cramping, your Majesty—came upon him and he fainted away—fainted away. Just before he became entirely unconscious, your Majesty, he said: 'Tell—tell father I cannot come.' I have said—much."

Adolph, having consumed large quantities of beer, and being naturally of an emotional temperament, could easily weep, so when he had finished his recital of the Crown Prince's pains and tortures, he pressed his handkerchief to his eyes and brushed the tears away.

The king gave utterance to a sound between a grunt and a growl, and after a moment, muttered into his beer stein:

"It's a lie!" But his Majesty liked the Margrave of Schwedt, and did not wish to push the matter of the lie too far. Perhaps, on the hard old king's hard heart, all unknown to himself, there was a soft spot for his son, and it

may be that Majesty wanted to believe the Margrave's lie. Had Adolph carried less beer, his lie would have been less ornate but far more convincing. It was, however, a good lie, meant to help a friend, and nothing is evil which adds, however little, to the sum of human happiness, or detracts in any degree from the sum of human misery.

Perhaps the Margrave's lie would not have been accepted by the king if it had been uttered earlier in the evening, when the king and his counselors were sober. No one can estimate the amount of evil that was averted by beer in The Tabagie during Frederick William's reign. Doubtless many a man has owed his life to the fact that the king and the members of The Tabagie became drunk before they had time to condemn him to death.

Of late, the hated English marriage had been a theme over which, upon the slightest provocation, the king would grow most enjoyably violent. Therefore, having failed in thoroughly arousing him by an attack upon the Crown Prince, Grumkow hoped to help his Majesty toward happiness by saying:

"Every one seems to try to anger our kind monarch. His family, his relatives, his allies all conspire to give him trouble. England

plays fast and loose in the matter of Prince Frederick's marriage to the Princess Wilhelmina, and—"

"But all that shall be brought to an end at once," cried the king, springing to his feet, and striking the table a great blow with his cane. "My brother-in-law shall make a dupe of me no longer!"

"No, no!" came in stentorian tones from the Margrave of Schwedt.

The king did not notice the interruption, but continued: "He has delayed the fulfillment of this treaty of marriage on so many flimsy pretexts that now I openly declare it abrogated—absolutely and unconditionally abrogated."

"I thank your Majesty!" cried Adolph of Schwedt, dancing about the room as if he were insane with joy.

The long Duke of Weissenfels rose like a Jack from a box, bowed majestically, and said: "I thank our gracious king. I thank him from the bottom of my heart for this manifestation of his regard for me, his Majesty's old friend and loyal ally."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Margrave of Schwedt. "Why do *you* thank his Majesty? Do you suppose that the abrogation of the treaty with England will result in any benefit

to you—you—you long, lean, drunken fool?''

The Margrave danced joyfully, but menacingly up to the tall thin Duke of Weissenfels, who was standing by the table. His Grace, fearing that the Margrave was going to attack him, placed the ducal hand slowly but forcefully on his enemy's breast and pushed. The Margrave, being top-heavy with beer and unable to withstand even a slight pressure, realizing that he was about to fall backward to the floor, grasped the ducal wrist. The duke was unable to sustain the Margrave's weight, so when the Margrave fell, with his Grace on top of him, each thought the other was attacking him, and both were badly frightened. After the fall, the duke's energies were exerted to get himself off the Margrave, and the Margrave's utmost efforts were put forth to get himself from under the duke. Therefore, the belligerents were separated easily, and rose to their feet, more frightened than hurt, and more angry than frightened.

The incident turned the tide of discussion from the English marriage, and other subjects were taken up.

Many topics of all degrees of importance, ranging from scandalous intrigues among the servants to the gravest matters of state, were

discussed, as usual, this evening at The Tabagie. But when the subject of Wilhelmina's marriage to Prince Frederick was dropped, Adolph lost interest in the further proceedings, and asked to be excused on the ground that he had no chair, and that he suffered great pain in his feet.

When the Margrave escaped from The Tabagie, he hurried to Henry's bedroom, where he found his new friend reading.

"Congratulate me, congratulate me, my friend!" cried the Margrave, trying to kiss Henry. "At last I am to have the princess!"

Henry thought the Margrave was mad, but said: "If what you say is true, I do congratulate you."

"It is true!" cried the Margrave, excitedly. "True, true, true! Ah, I am to have the angel! Was ever man so fortunate? I shall be so happy—so happy that heaven itself would be hateful to me. I shall have my heaven here with my angel, *meine liebling*. I shall be her knight—her slave. The English betrothal was annulled this evening by the king in open Tabagie. Grumkow told me to-day it would be, and he told me, too, that the king would give me the princess at once. *Lieber Himmel!* The happiness will burst my heart!"

The Margrave's words did not seem like the ravings of a madman, and a convincing sense of their truth beat painfully on Henry's heart. He had seen but little of the princess, and had talked with her but once. He was not a susceptible youth, ready to fall in love with every pretty face he met, but in Wilhelmina he had found a girl who was of his class—royal; who was beautiful in every sense of the word, but whose real appeal was stronger than the attraction of mere physical beauty could possibly be to a man of his temperament. He saw in this rare girl intellect, gentleness, purity and wisdom, but he also saw something more that drew him to her with greater force than all her charms. He saw that she suffered and that she needed help. He saw that she longed for that which is every woman's due—love, tenderness and protection.

The poor princess had known none of these since her babyhood save protection, and of that she had had too much. The queen loved her, but was an ill-tempered, peevish, foolish woman, venting all her spleen on Wilhelmina. The king, who seemed to hate the princess, treated her with all the brutality at his command, and in that respect Frederick William was a genius.

All this had been made clear to Henry during

his short residence in the palace of Berlin. To the right sort of a man, no appeal is stronger than a call for help from a woman. That call had come with all the distinctness of a cry.

Henry pulled himself together after the first shock of the Margrave's announcement, and asked:

"How about the princess? Has your wit triumphed with her?"

"I feel sure that it has, or will," answered Schwedt. "You have noticed the kindness with which she receives you?"

"I have been delighted by her graciousness," returned Henry.

"You see—you understand. She is kind to you because you are my friend," said the Margrave, standing dramatically before Henry, and emphasizing his remark with outstretched arms, as if he were bestowing a benediction. He also smiled a genuine Schwedtish smile and shook his head knowingly. The Margrave, being still under the influence of beer, was excited. He was also joyful.

"So she loves you?" asked Henry, who was inclined to smile, despite his fear that the important fact, Wilhelmina's marriage to the man standing before him, might easily become a fact indeed.

"Ah, my friend, I cannot say with certainty," answered Adolph. "But this I know. Even I—*Lieber Gott! Lieber Gott!* I love! I love! In all the world there lives not a man, my friend, who can give to this beautiful princess the devotion, the tenderness and the love that she shall have from me, her gentle knight. There is in my breast pain for her, joy for her, the tenderest love for her, such as all the world cannot match, and when she is my wife, I shall live for her, and to make her happy, I should gladly die for her. I should, I should!"

"But if she does not love you, would you not make her unhappy by marrying her?" suggested Fritz Henry.

"That may be true," answered the Margrave, sighing. "But my mother says kindness will win her in time."

He took a chair, was silent for a moment, and then, turning to Henry, asked:

"Would it not? Would not tenderness and love win her? I know nothing of woman's heart. You must be wise in the strange lore. I ask you, would she learn to love me if I poured out my whole life in adoration at her feet?"

Loath to answer the question, Henry did not at once respond. The Margrave waited a mo-

ment with pleading in his eyes, then insisted on an answer.

"Tell me truly, friend. Could I win her love by devotion if now she loves me not?"

"No," answered Henry. "The devotion of a man she does not love is to a woman what the salt sea brine is to a shipwrecked sailor—a mocking hope, a fatal remedy."

"*Ach, Gott!*" whispered the Margrave, drying the perspiration on his face with a great red handkerchief. "*Ach, Gott!* I feared as much. In my heart I knew it was true and there was no need to ask you."

"It *is* true, Margrave," said Henry. "If you win her from the king and do not gain her love, you will inflict on her the greatest of tortures."

"*Ach, Gott!* I'll never do it. I'll never do it!" cried the Margrave.

"Do you mean," asked Henry, springing to his feet, "that you would not marry her if the king forces her to accept you against her will?"

"*Ach,* truly I mean it," answered Schwedt, hoarsely. "May God judge me as I treat this beautiful princess. No, no! If my love for her kills me, I will not take her for my wife against her will."

The Margrave rose to his feet and walked distractedly about the room. Henry following

him, placed his hand on the honest fellow's shoulder, looked into his face, and found truth behind his words. He seized his hand, and said almost lovingly:

"Truly, it is a heart of gold."

"Yes, yes," sighed the Margrave, "but no one sees it save mother and you, and—and perhaps the Princess Mina. Good-night, my friend, good-night. You have drained my heart. There is no blood in it. There is no hope, and hope is the life of the blood."

The Margrave took his leave, and after extinguishing the candle, Henry sat by the window, gazing through the darkness down to the palace gardens.

After half the night spent in meditation, he said, haltingly to himself: "I will remain in Berlin. I am not so simple as to make a fool of myself about this girl. I will stay here. It may be that I can be of help to her, and perhaps I can make her life happier. My life may not be so happy when this curious adventure is ended, but I am willing to carry a heartache if it will relieve her of even a part of her burden." After looking out the window for a moment longer he sighed: "I'll go to bed and shut Wilhelmina out of my mind by shutting my eyes."

But he failed.

CHAPTER IX

DON'T CARE MAKES LOVE

During the next fortnight Henry was engaged in military duties at Spandau and Potsdam. He was in Berlin once or twice for short visits, and took supper with the Crown Prince, but did not see Wilhelmina.

One evening, after Henry had returned to Berlin, the Crown Prince invited him to visit the house of a merchant named Ritter. The attraction at the merchant's house for the Crown Prince was the daughter Doris She was not beautiful, but she was of a kindly nature, and played on the harpsichord with great skill. There was no thought of gallantry between her and the prince; music was the only bond.

On the evening of the visit, Doris and Henry played in turn at the harpsichord, while little Fritz breathed his soul, with some skill and great fervor, into his flute. On the prince's invitation, the elder Ritters sat listening to the music, and the evening was passed in innocent, healthful enjoyment.

Before nine o'clock the prince and Henry

left Ritter's house and hurried toward the palace.

"We must make haste," said little Fritz. "If the king returns from The Tabagie and does not find me at home, he might burst a blood vessel, and that would be a pity."

Soon after they left Ritter's, Henry noticed a man following them, and called Fritz's attention to him.

"He is probably a spy of Grumkow's," said little Fritz. "But as we have done no mischief, he will have his trouble for his reward."

"Our only mischief has been our music," said Henry, laughing. "Perhaps the king would consider it mischief."

"No," returned Fritz. "He wishes me to associate with the burgher families. His aversion to music is confined to my music, and is but a vent for his hatred of me."

"The king does not hate you," said Henry, protestingly.

"Indeed he does," returned the Crown Prince, emphatically; "and I fully realize that my life is in hourly peril from his violence. I am also in danger of assassination at Grumkow's hands. I wish I could believe that it is not true, but Grumkow will rid himself of me one of these fine days, and the king will give

my poor dear sister to Schwedt. Uneasy lies the head that expects to wear the crown."

"The Margrave of Schwedt will not marry the princess against her will," said Henry.

Looking up in quick surprise, Prince Fritz answered: "Mina will have no will in the matter. Schwedt will not know her wishes, but should he know of her antipathy and should he refuse to marry her, the marriage will take place anyway, with or without the consent of either my sister or Schwedt. Why do you say he will not marry her against her will?"

"He told me he would not," answered Henry.

"Poor, foolish Adolph. He will do whatever my father commands, and the king will do whatever Grumkow wills. Adolph has been madly in love with Mina since he first saw her two years ago, and my sister and I feel very sorry for the poor, simple, harmless fellow."

"She seems to treat him kindly," said Henry, speaking to fill up the pause.

"Of course she does," returned Prince Fritz. "Mina treats every one kindly. She is gentle and forgiving even with Grumkow, her arch enemy. My sister is the most beautiful character in the world; without her I should not want to live another day. She is the one bright spot in my miserable life. I want you to know

her better, but you must not misconstrue her kindness and fall in love with her, as every man has done who has come near her since she was a child. We will take her to Ritter's the next time we go, and you shall walk with her. That, I wish to tell you, is the greatest favor I can confer on you."

"It would be a great pleasure, and I should value the honor if I felt sure your father would not object. I hear he is very strict with the princess," answered Henry.

"You had better say cruel to her. That would be nearer the truth, and it is the great pain of my life. I could suffer all his cruelties without flinching, but the torture he inflicts on her is at times more than I can bear, and I almost wish that he were dead. When I think of Mina's future, I do sincerely wish that she could die. She was very ill a year ago, and I hoped she would die. She, too, hoped to die, but God has turned his face from my sister and me, and will not give us death because—because we want it. I tell you, friend," continued the Crown Prince, bitterly, "I am doomed, unless the king dies soon, and Mina is doomed to live."

Beside the path was a closed board fence, on the other side of which Henry fancied he

heard footfalls. Twice he looked back to see if the man he had noticed was following, but the fellow had disappeared. When the Crown Prince expressed his wish that his father might die, Henry's mind reverted to the supposed spy.

"Some one is on the other side of the fence," he said, speaking in low tones. "I caught the sound of footfalls, and I fear your words have been overheard."

"Probably you are right," said Fritz. "Spies and assassins are always on my track. The fence ends a short distance ahead of us, and we will investigate."

The Crown Prince drew his sword and Henry grasped the hilt of his own blade, holding it ready for instant use. When they reached the end of the fence, they moved cautiously, fearing an attack from ambush. Their fears were justified. Three men sprang from behind the fence and attacked the prince, paying no attention to Henry. Many years afterwards, it was learned that Grumkow had hired the assassins to kill the Crown Prince, and intended fastening the crime on Fritz Henry. When the attack came, the little prince, who fenced beautifully, held his assailants off till Henry got into the fray, after which

the fight was soon ended and the three ruffians were put to flight, with the plucky little prince in pursuit.

"Let them go," cried Henry. "They may be leading you into another ambush. We have driven them off. Now let us make our way home as soon as possible. I hope your words concerning the king were not overheard."

"No, no, they were not overheard," returned the prince. "I was speaking very low. I am sure no one could have heard me five feet away. But if they were overheard, and if Grumkow could convince my father that I spoke them—"

The Crown Prince was silenced by the thought of probable consequences.

"If Grumkow should convince the king, what do you suppose would be the result?" asked Henry.

"Infanticide," answered the prince, laughing at his own gruesome jest.

The Crown Prince and Fritz Henry entered the palace by a private door, and hastened to the queen's parlor, the prince wishing to say good-night to his mother.

The queen was seated in a great armchair, busy with her needle-work, while her maid, Ramen, read aloud. When the prince and Henry were announced, the reading stopped

and all the ladies rose save the queen. There were present, besides her Majesty, the Princess Wilhelmina, the Princess Don't Care, Sonnsfeld and Ramen. Soon the Margrave of Schwedt was announced.

The prince kissed his mother's hand and was about to leave the room when the queen asked him to sit beside her for a moment. Henry made his bow to her Majesty and turned to Wilhelmina. The princess's face lighted up beautifully when he approached, and she gave him her hand to kiss. She was standing apart from the others, and when Henry had made his bow, said laughingly:

"When last we met, I believe you expressed a desire that you might have speech with me soon again."

"Yes, your Highness," answered Henry.

"I can hardly believe that you said it," she responded, laughing softly. "Two long weeks is not 'soon again'."

"I have been at Spandau and Potsdam," answered Henry, "and have almost determined to resign my commission and to leave the court."

"I don't blame you," returned Wilhelmina, "but I hope your determination will remain 'almost', and will not become complete."

Henry again observed the queen glancing toward Wilhelmina, and imagined that the princess was uneasy because of his presence. So he said: "I thank your Highness. I shall remain."

He bowed to the princess, crossed the room, and stopped in front of Don't Care, who gave him her hand to kiss.

"You are late in reaching me, Sir Henry," she said, giving the English knightly title, partly by accident, partly in jest, and continuing with a sigh: "Every one comes before Don't Care."

"It is only modesty that keeps your Highness from knowing that the Princess Don't Care comes before every one," responded Henry.

"Did you make that pretty speech to Mina, too?" asked the little princess.

"All I said to your sister was that I had almost determined to leave Berlin."

"But you will not. You shall not," said Don't Care, pettishly. "You are the only real gentleman that has visited Berlin in months. I wonder who you are. Why don't you tell us? The queen says you are surely of noble blood. Mina, as usual, is non-committal, and when I asked father about you, he said he knew nothing save that you were six feet tall. That's all

father cares to know about any man. He did say, however, that you had more brains than Grumkow. He also said that he would beat any one with his stick who tries to learn who you are. You see there is a delightful mystery about you. For all I know, you may be a prince in disguise, but Mina says if you were a prince, you would not be so great a fool as to bury yourself in this hole, where we have nothing but cabbage to eat."

"Every man is a fool at some time in his life, and perhaps my time has arrived, or has always been here," answered Henry, laughing. He was about to make his bow to the little beauty, when she said:

"Are you going?"

"I fear I must," answered Henry.

"I have not seen you for a long time," said the princess, "and we have never had one moment together, by ourselves. Meet me at ten o'clock to-morrow morning at the new fountain in the west garden, and we'll see if Don't Care can offer you an inducement that will keep you in Berlin."

Don't Care's astonishing request startled Fritz Henry, but of course there was only one reply to be made, so he said:

"I shall be honored."

At this point the king entered, having come from The Tabagie.

The prince and Fritz Henry soon made their bows to the queen, and as they were passing out, Don't Care ran to Henry's side and whispered:

"Don't forget Don't Care to-morrow morning."

Henry glanced toward Mina, and saw that she had heard Don't Care's words.

When the king and the Margrave had departed, the queen asked sharply of Wilhelmina:

"Why did you give your hand to the stranger to kiss? You are as good as married to Prince Frederick."

"If I were married, mother," answered Mina, "there could be no harm in what I did. He kissed your hand and Don't Care's."

"Don't answer me, but go to bed!" cried the queen.

Glad to be dismissed, Mina and Sonnsfeld hurriedly left the room.

The next morning Henry awakened to a day of trouble because a beautiful princess had made a tryst with him. He cared little for Don't Care's beauty, and the girl had nothing else to recommend her. On the other hand, her evident ill feeling for her sister Wilhelmina

antagonized him. He felt that the younger princess not only did not love her sister, but in a way, shared her father's aversion.

Henry suspected, too, that notwithstanding her simplicity and vivacity, Don't Care had inherited at least a part of her father's bad temper, and felt sure that occasion might easily develop it. In short, he was far from wishing to meet the little princess at the new fountain, even had it not been a dangerous adventure. A secret meeting with one of the royal princesses was an honor that none but a reckless man would desire, though there seemed to be no way for Henry to refuse it.

It is true that Berlin was the most democratic court in the world, and that any ruffian might gain access to the royal family. It was equally true that Don't Care was allowed to exercise the liberty of a burgher girl, and in many instances had been guilty of imprudences from which a virtuous burgher girl would have shrunk. Still she was a princess royal, and to meet her clandestinely might, if discovered, prove a costly piece of gallantry. But Henry could not well remain away, so he determined to keep the tryst, and to act as prudently as possible under the circumstances.

All that is necessary to give of the interview

is a small portion to show Don't Care's budding love for Henry, and to throw light upon its consequences.

"Ah, here you are!" cried Don't Care, running down the path, looking like the spirit of morning. She came quickly to Henry, placing her hands familiarly on his shoulder. He stepped back and bowed respectfully.

"Oh, you need not be so respectful and distant," cried Don't Care, smiling and dimpling exquisitely; "no one can see us. The trees and the shrubbery hide us."

"But there are no leaves on the trees," returned Henry, "and I fear we may be seen."

"If I don't care, why should you? Most men would be proud of a chance to meet the Princess Don't Care."

"I should be, your Highness, if—"

"Don't say 'your Highness'; say 'Don't Care'. That is my name to—to you," interrupted the princess. "You see we have progressed rapidly in—in our friendship."

"I wish I might tell you how highly I value your Highness's condescension, and the favor you show me. But I fear—I fear— You must know that if your father were to discover—were to know of your great condescension—of your willingness to grant me the favor of calling you

Don't Care, and the great pleasure of meeting you here, his Majesty would be angry, and the result might be ruin to me—perhaps death."

"Would you not risk death for your lady love?" she asked, looking up with an expression in her eyes half mirthful, half wistful. "Any true knight would."

"I might risk all, your Highness, if conditions were different, but a wise man, though brave, runs away from a danger against which there is no defense. I should not have come to meet your Highness had I listened to the dictates of prudence, and I beg permission to leave you."

Henry started backward down the path, retreating from the fiery little beauty, but she ran after him, uttering a cry.

"At least, tell me before you go that you care—that you would stay if you dared," whispered Don't Care, pleadingly.

It would have been hard and perhaps dangerous to tell the princess the truth, so he evaded a direct answer by saying:

"If your Highness were of my rank, or I of yours, I should be only too glad—oh, I beg your royal Highness to let me leave you. I must not answer your question and you must not ask it."

"Would you not risk death for your lady love?"

He took the princess's hand, kissed it formally, and ran away from her.

Do not believe that Henry was an over modest man, or that his treatment of the princess was at all due to the fact that he was of the blood of Joseph, for he was not. Later on, if you read this true history, you will find that he was bold enough when he wished to speak, and that neither fear nor modesty sealed his lips when love prompted him to open them. Don't Care was the wrong girl.

When Henry ran away from the princess, she was greatly piqued, but soon her vanity came to her rescue, and she attributed his retreat to his fear of her exalted rank and her still more exalted beauty. She believed that her power of attraction was almost omnipotent with men, and experience had gone a long way to justify the assumption. Although she was disappointed with the interview, her heart throbbed with joy at the thought of Henry's evident emotion, and from her point of view, his great fear of her beauty and rank was the highest compliment he could pay her.

These considerations, coupled with the fact that he had not been brought to her feet so easily as other men, greatly enhanced his value in her eyes, for to Don't Care, nothing was as

attractive as the unattainable. She felt sure, however, that she should soon be able to calm the Handsome Captain's fears, to beguile his caution, and bring him to his knees. To subjugate him to the power of her charms was, at the time of the interview, Don't Care's only purpose. Once subjugated, her use for him would cease. Henry's reluctance to yield to her blandishments might, if he proved too stubborn, anger her Highness, though eventually it would result in a passionate attachment on her part, owing to the powerful allurement of the unattainable as represented by Henry's handsome person. But vanity alone was at the bottom of her motive in the beginning.

Soon after Henry had gone, Don't Care sauntered back to the palace, humming a French waltz as she went, and, after a few minutes' meditation, feeling surer of her conquest than if Henry had made passionate love to her.

CHAPTER X

ROYAL DOMESTIC BLISS

After leaving the garden, the little princess entered the palace and went to the queen's parlor, where she found her sister.

"Where have you been so early this morning?" asked Wilhelmina.

"I have been talking to your friend, the Handsome Captain, at the new fountain," answered Don't Care, with significant emphasis on the words "your friend".

Mina flushed despite her effort to appear unconcerned, and asked, with a shade of irritation in her voice:

"Why do you call him *my* friend? I have hardly spoken a hundred words to him."

"Perhaps he is not so much your friend as you imagine," returned Don't Care. "But you have not missed a great deal in losing him to me. He amounts to little. There is nothing about him worth mentioning except his good looks. He certainly is handsome—the handsomest man I ever saw—but he has neither learning, good manners, wit nor boldness. I love a bold man. He is already silly for love

of me, and begged me last night to meet him at the new fountain this morning, though he was almost afraid to speak. I met him only to make a jest of him."

If the first part of Don't Care's speech caused Wilhelmina a moment's pain, the latter part neutralized it, for Mina had heard her sister ask Henry to meet her at the new fountain, and felt sure that the initiative had all been on the part of the little princess. Applying the doctrine "false in part, false in all", Mina concluded that Henry's infatuation existed only in Don't Care's imagination, or was purely an invention. The fact that Mina analyzed the situation at all was evidence that she was interested in the Handsome Captain to a degree unsuspected even by herself.

After Don't Care had dubbed Henry the "Handsome Captain," he became known at once among the ladies of the immediate royal circle by that name. No one knew who he was, but soon all knew that he was of noble blood, for the king had interrogated him on the subject of his rank.

"Are you of noble blood?" the king had asked. "Don't—don't tell me any other word about yourself. I am curious to know only one thing—are you of noble blood?"

"I am, your Majesty," answered Henry.

After a long pause, the king again spoke, fixing his glittering eyes on Henry:

"Grumkow says you are a spy."

"Do your recruiting officers kidnap spies for your Majesty's regiment?" asked Henry. "If they are such fools, your Majesty should dismiss them or hang them. Did I come to Berlin of my own will?"

"No, no, you did not. You did not. Surely, you did not," answered the king.

"Baron Grumkow doubtless is a wise counselor, but in this instance one would almost be justified in saying that he is a fool," said Henry, looking unflinchingly into the king's eyes.

"What!" cried the king, stepping back in surprise. "But you're right. You are right. None but a fool would believe you are a spy—under the circumstances. Grumkow pretends to suspect every one who finds favor in my eyes." The king paused, muttered unintelligibly for a moment, laughed softly, and continued as if speaking to himself: "Bless the good God for sending me one man who is not afraid to speak his mind. Grumkow, a fool! Good! Good! There's not another man in my kingdom that would have dared to say it to my face.

He's not afraid of the devil himself. Good! Good! Not afraid of the devil!" Turning to Henry, his Majesty said: "The troops are rested. Set them to work."

This conversation occurred on the day that Henry met Don't Care at the new fountain, the day after the visit to Ritter's. Early in the evening of the same day, his Majesty said to the queen:

"My new captain of Grenadiers is of noble blood. Receive him kindly. Perhaps that rascal Fritz will profit by his company."

The Crown Prince and Mina heard their father's order to the queen, and so great was the breach between the king and his two children that his Majesty's favor, shown in so marked a degree, placed Fritz Henry in the rank of their enemies. Forgetting past service, the Crown Prince at once concluded that his new friend was the king's spy, and impressed Wilhelmina with at least a part of his suspicion.

Mina and Fritz had learned from sad experience to believe that no man could win the king's favor who was not their enemy. Mina also knew of Henry's meeting with Don't Care, and it served to strengthen her distrust, notwithstanding her knowledge of the manner in

which the meeting had been brought about. The Crown Prince's influence over Wilhelmina was so great that he easily convinced her she would be a great fool to trust the Handsome Captain, and the result was that the princess was very unhappy.

Soon after the king had spoken to the queen about Fritz Henry, his Majesty left the room, and the Margrave of Schwedt joined the Crown Prince and the princess.

"Your new friend, the Handsome Captain, has joined the ranks of Don't Care," said Mina, laughing, as Adolph approached. "Her friends do not long remain our friends, so I suppose we shall soon be compelled to number him with the host of our enemies."

"Why do you say he has joined the ranks of Don't Care?" asked the Crown Prince, who knew nothing of the meeting at the fountain.

"Yes, why?" queried the Margrave eagerly. "I believe he is a true man, and the first requisite for a true man is to be a true friend."

"He met Don't Care by appointment this morning at the new fountain, and she says he is dying for love of her," answered Mina, laughing nervously.

"*Ach,* she lies!" cried the Margrave excitedly, mopping the perspiration from his broad

face with a huge red handkerchief. The Margrave hated Don't Care, as nearly as his gentle heart could hate any one, because of her open ridicule and contempt. "That is—you know —I mean—I beg your Highness to forgive me for using the ugly word. I spoke in excitement, anger, indignation. The—the beautiful Princess Charlotte is mistaken. I should not have used that ugly word—not for worlds—had I not been surprised and excited, too, yes,—excited."

The Margrave paused to regain his breath, and continued: "Listen. The captain, my friend, was not to blame in the matter. I, with my own ears—with these ears—heard the princess, your sister, invite, ask, and entreat the captain to meet her at the new fountain. Listen! I'll tell you. She followed him to the door and said to him imploringly—she said—*ach Gott,* she said—what did she say? I almost forget what she said! *Ach!* She said, 'Come' —she said, 'Come to the new fountain—sure—don't fail'. It was so."

"But he went," suggested Wilhelmina, laughing.

The Margrave gazed steadily at the princess for a moment. "Of course he went. He could not do otherwise," he answered, blinking,

stretching out his hands imploringly, and speaking under great excitement. Adolph was Henry's friend, and Adolph's friendship was of the quality that does battle for a friend assailed. "You see," he continued, striving to be calm, but almost out of breath from excitement, "you see, he is a man, and must go when the princess says, 'Come'."

Notwithstanding the Margrave's effort to calm himself, his excitement grew upon him, and he danced about with an agility little to be expected in a short mountain of flesh. "It is this way, my princess," he continued. "We'll say that you are a man. We'll say that I am a beautiful woman, and—and—"

Mina and the Crown Prince could not restrain a smile.

"Yes, yes,—it is funny. I know it is. If I were a woman!" Adolph laughed nervously—"*Lieber Himmel!* What a sight I should be if I were a woman! People would travel long journeys and would pay a mark to see me—two marks for a good seat. Yes, yes, it is funny. I'll change the metaphor. If you were a man—we'll leave that stand as it is. *Ach,* if you were a man, my princess, no other man would have any chance against you of winning any woman. Then I could take your hand—and—"

The Margrave reached out eagerly for the hands of the princess, but quickly drew back without touching her. "Pardon, my princess. My love will not obey. This evening he is a foolish fool."

"Is not love always a foolish fool?" asked Mina, smiling.

"Yes, princess, love is always either a foolish fool, or the wisest fool on earth," answered the Margrave. "There is no middle ground of mere common sense for the little rascal, and he who lacks common sense is always a fool, though there are wise fools in the world. Unfortunately, my princess, it was the foolish fool love that took up his home in my poor heart. But—but—to come back. If your Highness were a man and the Crown Prince here were a woman, and if the woman should say to you: "My friend, don't fail to meet me at the west fountain in the new garden—no, the new garden in the west—*ach,* I *am* foolish—at the new fountain in the west garden, what would the woman mean?"

"What would she mean?" asked the princess, smiling.

"Love—foolish love. You, being a man, could not turn away your face as a woman may, and feigning modesty when you feel dis-

gust, say, with downcast eyes: 'Oh, I may not. I fear—I fear my hard, cruel father would be angry. Oh, I dare not.' No. You could make no excuse—two penalties a man must pay for being a man. He must forego the love he wants but cannot have, and may not refuse that which he does not want, but still must take. Then, too, he must endure in silence the little lies a woman sometimes tells about him. He cannot say: 'It is not so' when she says that he is desperate for love of her. Woman has her burdens, but a man of fine honor also has burdens that are none the lighter because he may, if he wishes, throw them off. He will often carry a heavy burden rather than explain at a woman's expense."

The Crown Prince showed signs of annoyance, but Adolph must finish his speech.

"If Captain Henry met the princess, he did so because he had no alternative. God has given me but few talents—very few—but every day I am thankful that He has given me to know a true man when I see him, and to trust a true friend when I have one. Captain Henry is both. I have said—much."

Neither the prince nor the princess responded at once to Adolph's long speech, but after a moment's silence, the prince said:

"My dear Margrave, what you have said is very interesting, but pray leave me with my sister, that we may have a few words together. It is a privilege we seldom enjoy."

The Margrave at once withdrew, greatly humiliated, not by the prince's words, but because he, Adolph the Shrewd, had not earlier caught the signals of dismissal.

When Adolph left, Fritz said hurriedly: "I am glad you told me about our new friend's meeting with Don't Care. Stumpy's great favor made me suspicious, and now this intimacy with Don't Care convinces me that the fellow is not to be trusted. I'm sorry to be forced to the belief, for I have formed a plan of escape from this Prussian hell, and intended taking the new captain into my confidence. I hoped to have his help, but now—"

"Don't try to run away," pleaded Wilhelmina, almost wailing out her words. "If you go, I shall be entirely alone. You are my only comfort, my only joy. Pray do not leave me. If you go, I shall die."

"That is a selfish request, Mina," answered the Crown Prince, petulantly. "You, of course, are bound hand and foot here. It is impossible for you to escape unless you go as the wife of one of the bestial creatures old Stumpy has

chosen for you. But if you were generous, you would not wish me to suffer just because you can escape. You are always thinking only of yourself. Every one is—no one gives a generous thought to me."

"I know, brother, it was selfish to want you to remain for my sake, but that was not the real reason for my protest. You cannot escape—it is impossible—and if you try and fail—if the king takes you—I fear, oh! I fear he will be the last man in the kingdom to save you from death. You will be hanged as a deserter. Father and Grumkow will call it treason. Ah, brother, let us cling to the ills we have, and God will bring us help in His own good time."

"I've already waited too long for the help that God is going to bring," answered the prince, sullenly. "Nothing that you can say will alter my determination. I am going to run away. If I am caught and hanged, so much the better. I don't want to live. Stumpy told me only the other day—he is always telling me—that if I had a spark of manhood in me, I would not endure the abuse he puts upon me. He's right. The queen, too, says I am a fool for not running away. She advises me to go to England, where King George would be only too glad to receive me. All my friends but you ad-

vise me to make my escape, and I'm going to do it. I tell you, Mina, I'm going. A few days more and I'll be out of this purgatory unless my damnable luck clings to me. I wish I could trust this new captain. I need him and could use him, for, as the king says, he fears nothing. A brave, calm, daring man, such as this fellow is, would be just the companion I need."

After the Margrave's abrupt dismissal, the prince and his sister went to the anteroom through which the queen's parlor was reached from the long hall, and closed the door after them. The king had left a few minutes before and was not expected to return, but with Frederick William the unexpected was always to be looked for.

Presently the conversation between the prince and the princess was brought to an abrupt end by sounds of a well-known halting footstep and echoes of a thumping cane coming down the corridor. The king was returning, evidently in great fury, for his breathing could be heard even above the noise of his footstep and cane.

Mina hurriedly returned to the queen's parlor just before the king entered the anteroom by the outer door. When the king saw the prince, the ire of Prussian Majesty began,

as usual, to make itself furiously manifest.

"What are you doing here, you—you rascal?" demanded the king.

"I am standing here," answered Fritz.

"Ah, you would be impertinent, would you?" cried the irate father, lifting his stick. "You would answer me insolently? If I were to do my duty as a father, I'd lay this stick across your back. What are you doing here? Answer civilly or I'll—I'll beat you."

"I was about to enter the queen's parlor," answered Fritz, "but hearing your Majesty's approach, I waited till you should go first."

"*Ach!* Fine humility! Beautiful meekness! If you had the spirit of a man, you would resent my treatment of you. The new captain answers me sharply and speaks his mind. He is not afraid of me. He resents an insult or an imputation even from me. Yes, and quickly, too. 'Tis a sure indication of honesty. There's no resentment, no courage, no pride in you. I would to God that you were a girl and that your sister Don't Care were you. If my father had treated me as I treat you, I should have run away, or—or have killed myself. I should not have endured it. Come with me, you rascal, while I speak to your mother. I want you to go to The Tabagie with me. There'll be

something for you to hear at The Tabagie to-night—something to hear. Yes, by the devil, to hear!"

The king entered the queen's parlor and the prince followed, making an effort to smother his anger.

The king and Fritz found the queen, the two princesses, Sonnsfeld and Ramen busily engaged with their needle-work. All rose when the king entered. After his Majesty had spoken, the queen resumed her seat and he took a chair beside her. All others, of course, remained standing.

The king was in a furious mood, and soon began to express himself on the subject of household expenses. His Majesty economized in all things to save money for the maintenance of his army, and thus laid the foundation of the Prussian empire. Turning to the queen, he said:

"You all eat like gluttons. Gluttony is a sin of the flesh. You not only sin against God, but you drain my treasury and waste money that is needed for the nation's defense."

"Draining your treasury, I take it, is a much greater sin in your eyes than the offense against God," spoke up intrepid little Don't Care, impatiently tapping the floor with her foot.

The king continued, without noticing the interruption: "You're all gluttons, I tell you, and you'll ruin me and spoil your health if you keep it up."

"If our health is ruined, it will be by starvation, not by over-feeding," said Don't Care, again interrupting her father. "We had nothing for dinner to-day but cabbage and carrots, and not enough of those. After you had helped yourself to the carrots, you threw the dish at Fritz, leaving only boiled cabbage for the rest of us. I have no fear of taking gout from eating too much cabbage, neither have I fear of offending God on the score of gluttony at your table. Leviticus contains not one word against eating too much cabbage."

The king tried to speak, but his daughter had the floor and kept it. "There is not a decent burgher in Berlin that did not have a better dinner on his table than we had to-day. Ruin you? Drain your treasury? You are starving your wife and children—starving them just because you hate to see them eat, and because you are so miserly that you begrudge them even a poor mouthful of cabbage. When I am hungry I go out and get my dinner at an inn, and tell the keeper to collect the charges from you. You pay them, too, for you brought me into this

world, and you know you're bound to feed me. I'll not starve, I'll give you that to understand. You may starve the others, if they'll let you, but I'll find enough to eat, and you'll pay the bill."

"I'll beat you if you don't keep still!" shouted the king.

"I don't care if you do," answered Don't Care, stepping up to her father defiantly. "I don't care, don't care, don't care! Beat me, if you wish, but you can't silence me unless you cut my tongue out, and then I'll scream like a deaf mute."

Helpless Majesty mumbled a few words under his breath, became silent, and Don't Care walked away in triumph.

The Margrave had left the room, but returned presently with Fritz Henry and at once sought Wilhelmina. Henry wished to speak to her, but felt that the queen was watching him; so he stopped beside Don't Care.

"You're a coward," said the little princess. "'He who fears'—you know the rest."

"I freely confess that I am a coward," answered Henry, laughing. "A man who is not a fool will not allow himself to begin to yearn for what he can never have. The fox that convinced himself the grapes were sour

"I'll beat you if you don't keep still!" shouted the king

set an example that all wise men should follow. Had the fox encouraged his belief that the grapes were sweet, he might have gone through life with a heartache—yearning for them."

Don't Care shrugged her white shoulders, smiled till her little teeth gleamed between her red lips, and said:

"Oh, foolish fox! Why did he not jump?" She jumped very gracefully to show how it should be done.

"Doubtless he knew his limitations, and knew how high he could jump, or rather how high he could not jump," suggested Henry.

"If he had tried with all his might to jump, and had been unable to reach the vine, it might have bent down to him. Who knows?" said Don't Care, bending as the vine might bend, glancing demurely up to Henry's face, and then quickly looking toward the floor as if in a violent fit of modesty. Modesty and Don't Care were total strangers.

"The vine cannot bend, and the fox that hopes for it will hope in vain. It is a cruel vine that will hold out the vain hope," said Henry, with apparent regret.

"But if the vine wishes very much for the fox to have its grapes?" asked the dimpling

princess, with quick-coming breath and glowing eyes.

"In that case, both are in danger, and there is but one course left for the fox."

"What is that?" asked Don't Care.

"He must run away," replied Henry, "and that is what I shall do."

The princess laughed. Henry bowed and went to where the Crown Prince, Wilhelmina and the Margrave were standing at the opposite side of the room. The prince took no notice of Henry, but the princess bowed.

"I hear you are to be at The Tabagie this evening," said the Margrave.

"Yes, I am to have that honor, and—and that pleasure," answered Henry.

"Are you so great a beer drinker," asked the princess, "that you can confront the honor of The Tabagie with confidence and pleasure?"

"I do not like beer," answered Henry, "and I shall face the ordeal with fear and trembling."

"You shall sit by me and I will drink your beer," said Adolph. "That arrangement will work a double good. I shall have the beer and you will have the credit of drinking it."

"I thank you, Margrave," returned Henry. "The beer drinking would have inclined me to

evade the honor had I not feared to offend his Majesty. Just at this time I value the king's favor because I hope that I may be able to use it to benefit my friends."

"And incidentally, yourself," interrupted the Crown Prince, with a sneering smile.

Henry was startled, but did not at once reply, hoping that the prince would say something to soften his too evident meaning. But the Crown Prince remained silent, and after a long, awkward pause, Henry answered:

"Perhaps if your Highness knew more about the real situation, you would understand that the King of Prussia has nothing to give that I covet. I have nothing to gain by his favor and nothing to lose by his frown, save the power to help those who, I have hoped, would give me their faith."

The little prince tossed his head disdainfully and walked away. The Margrave, evidently much disturbed, followed him, leaving Fritz Henry alone with Wilhelmina.

"Forgive my brother," said the princess. "He has been betrayed so often by false friends that he suspects every one who receives the king's favor."

"I care very little what the prince thinks or feels," returned Henry, "so long as I am

sure of his sister's confidence. I hope that you will tell me frankly when I lose it, for on that day I shall leave Berlin, never to return. You see, if you distrust me or fear me, you may easily rid yourself of me. I implore your Highness to pardon me for speaking so plainly, and for saying what I am about to say, but I speak with full knowledge that all the reward I can ever receive for any good that I may bring to you, or for any evil that I may be able to avert, is your faith in me. It is all I ask—all I expect. I have just told you that the king has no favor to grant that I would accept other than the privilege of living in the palace near you. I should be glad to give all I have—my life—almost my soul to bring happiness to you, and to avert the frightful evils that threaten you. I would gladly—"

"Don't, don't! Please do not speak to me in that way," pleaded the princess, greatly moved. "I beg of you not to speak—not to—I do trust you, indeed I do. I care not what my brother may say, nor what may happen to make you seem untrue to us, I shall still believe in you. Even though appearances may be against you, I shall hold fast to my faith in you, and will try to keep my brother's confidence unshaken. He is of a suspicious nature,

and—and thought he had reason to suspect you."

"May I ask what I have done to cause him to doubt me?" asked Henry.

"I don't like to say," answered the princess.

"I do not urge you to speak, but if I do not know my fault, I may commit it again," said Henry, plainly showing his eagerness.

By an effort that was very apparent, Wilhelmina forced herself to speak: "It is hard for my brother and me to believe that a friend to the king can be a friend to us, but it is harder for us to believe that—that— I fear I cannot tell you what I was going to say."

"I implore your Highness to tell me," insisted Henry.

The princess lifted her eyes, but they fell before his gaze, and she continued haltingly:

"It is harder for us to believe that one who is my sister's friend can long be ours. Oh, it is hard for me to say that to—to you, who are almost a stranger. I love my sister, but she does not love my brother and me."

Tears were hanging in Mina's eyes, and her voice was almost choked by emotion. Henry remained silent to give the princess a moment in which to recover her self-possession, then turned to her and asked:

"Why do you and the Crown Prince believe I am your sister's friend?"

"Pray do not ask me to explain," returned Mina, speaking in low tones and looking toward the floor.

"I shall not," returned Henry. "I feel sure that the Crown Prince has based his conclusion on the fact that I met the princess, your sister, this morning at the new fountain. I cannot explain why or how the meeting came about, but—" Henry paused, turned quickly toward Wilhelmina, then spoke with a touch of anger and a note of command in his voice: "But I am going to speak what is in my heart, although one minute ago I had not supposed it possible that I should ever utter it. What I am about to say will explain all that has happened, and will be the key to all that may hereafter happen. I love you, and my life is at your service."

The princess turned to leave Henry, but he checked her in a tone that was almost a command:

"You shall hear all I have to say, and when I have finished, I shall, if you wish, leave Berlin forever. Turn your face slightly from me and look up; I fear the queen is watching you. I did not intend to say what I have just said, but it is out, and now I must leave no shadow

of doubt in your mind that I spoke the truth. I do not ask to touch your hand. I do not ask even one word from your lips. I ask nothing in return for my love save that you believe—save that you know—it to be true. I shall never again speak of my love unless—unless by your command, and for that I do not even hope."

"No, no," whispered the girl, almost inaudibly.

"You need not assure me of that," returned Henry. "I beg you to believe that I know my love is hopeless, but I also beg you to believe that it will last to the end of my life. That which has come upon me so suddenly must be of tremendous force to induce me to remain in Berlin without hope of reward, and to say to you what I have just said. It has taken entire possession of me. It is beyond my control, and I do not seem to be myself. I hope that through all your life you will know that I speak the truth."

An awkward pause ensued, lasting so long that Henry was beginning to fear he had offended the princess and that he must leave her, and take his departure from Berlin at the earliest opportunity. But when, by chance, she turned her face toward him and looked into his eyes, an impulse seized her which

she could not resist, and against her will, she said in a low whisper: "I do know. Whatever happens, I shall always know. I never shall doubt—never again."

If at that moment the queen had been watching the princess, her Majesty could not have failed to read what was in the girl's heart.

Henry and the princess stood for several minutes in silence.

Presently she took her handkerchief from a pouch in her flowing sleeve. Henry saw that tears were coming, so he nodded to the Margrave of Schwedt, and that worthy friend approached.

"When does The Tabagie convene?" asked Henry.

"We must follow the king when he leaves," answered Adolph.

Hardly had the Margrave spoken when the king started to leave the room, marching with uplifted cane and thunderous rumblings as he drove the Crown Prince before him.

Adolph laughed as he watched the king and Fritz leaving the room, but Henry, seeing tears in Wilhelmina's eyes, longed to strangle Prussian Majesty, and to make an end of it all then and there.

"To The Tabagie!" cried Adolph, lifting his

clenched hand on high and marching after the king.

Fritz Henry, left alone for a moment with the princess, said: "Forgive me if my words have added to your unhappiness."

"I—I am sorry—very sorry to say that they have not," answered Mina, blushing beautifully, and making a careful study of the floor, "and I am sorrier to have told you so. But—but you know how easy it is to say the thing one does not intend to say."

"It is with speech as with all else. We do and say the things we must, and for my part, I am glad that I spoke," answered Henry.

"And I, too, am glad," she answered, as he took his leave.

CHAPTER XI

THE MARGRAVE'S BLESSED LIE

When Henry and the Margrave entered The Tabagie, they found the king in earnest consultation with Baron Grumkow and Field Marshal Seckendorf, standing apart from the other members of the Parliament. The Crown Prince stood alone near the king's end of the table. The Tabagians were scattered in groups about the room, and every one but the little prince was talking.

The kindly Margrave at once went to him, but received a sullen response to his greeting. Fritz Henry had stopped near by, hoping that the little fellow would make some kindly sign of recognition. But when the Crown Prince caught Henry's eyes, he turned away with a well-defined sneer on his face. Henry's sympathy was so great, and his sorrow for the boy's unhappy lot was so keen, that the Crown Prince's contempt aroused only a feeling of pity. The unfortunate young fellow enjoyed the high privilege of being the brother of the girl to whom Fritz Henry had just spoken his love, and from whom he had received an

answer that was as near an admission of love as the princess could give. All these considerations made it easy for Henry to overlook the prince's frowns and to render him a great service later in the evening.

Notwithstanding Adolph's persistent kindness, the Crown Prince ignored his advances. With no effort to conceal his contempt and ill temper, he moved two or three steps away, where he stood, scowling on all about him. The gentle Margrave, feeling only pity for the Crown Prince, smiled broadly when his advances were repulsed, returned to Henry, shrugged his shoulders and said:

"What does it matter? Is he not the brother of the princess?"

The Margrave soon had an opportunity to "heap coals of fire" on the prince's head, and like a man, he did it.

"Did you see him run from me?" asked the Margrave, looking up at Henry's face.

"Yes," answered Henry, smiling, "and did you see him turn his face from me when I was about to speak? I am sorry for the boy, and am sure that if I were in his place, my temper would be worse than his."

"Do you know," said the Margrave, "it is generous in you to feel as you do toward the

Crown Prince, who owes you so much and treats you so unkindly. It is easier for me to forgive him than it is for you to overlook his faults. He is Wilhelmina's brother and I love her. You don't. I tell you, my friend, if you loved the princess, you would love every one with her blood in his veins. You would love old Stumpy. There would be times when—*lieber Himmel,* yes—when you would want to kiss him."

"No, no," cried Henry, laughing.

"Perhaps not," returned the Margrave, seriously. "But I could—I could kiss anything. When a man is in love, don't you know, if he doesn't watch himself, why he loves—he loves the very devil himself. You don't know how wonderfully love softens the heart."

Henry thought he knew, but he did not enlighten the Margrave. He turned the subject of discussion back to the prince.

"I am very sorry for him," said Henry. "Nothing that he could do would arouse my resentment. He is barely responsible for his acts. His troubles, I know, would unbalance my mind."

Suddenly the Margrave evinced signs of excitement, tinged with alarm.

"The king is going to take his seat," he

cried. "Let us get chairs. I had to stand during the last Tabagie I attended. I have the very worst feet in all Germany, and I suppose Germany has the worst feet in the world. Mine don't seem to have been made to walk on, but to hold me down and to ache."

The Margrave seized a chair, and Henry got one beside it When the king was seated, Henry slipped quickly into his chair, but two men tried to appropiate the Margrave's, notwithstanding that worthy potentate's desperate effort to cling to it. One enterprising Tabagian with cuckoo tendencies went so far as to crowd in front of Adolph and was about to sit in his chair, when he drew it back from the table, and the intruder sat on the floor. After his enemy's fall, Adolph hurriedly occupied the chair. The fallen member rose to his feet, remained standing for a moment at the table, glared fiercely at the Margrave, then stepped back to the wall, where he stood in wrath among the unseated. The Margrave drew his chair to the table beside Fritz Henry, saying:

"Now, I'll drink your beer. I may get very drunk, but I'll do you this favor if I die for it."

"You're always ready to do any one a favor, Margrave," responded Henry. "Your heart is as kind as your head is wise."

"I thank you, my friend," said Adolph, seizing Henry's hand and giving it a friendly squeeze under the table. "Do you know, that is the first disinterested bit of flattery I have ever had from any one except my mother and the princess." Adolph's great face shone with the luster of joy, and one of the gentlest, tenderest hearts in all the world was overflowing.

Henry was rapidly learning to love the Margrave, though the good fellow's grotesque face and figure, his eccentricities of manner and his propensity to drink beer all militated against respect, making Adolph more to be laughed at than revered.

Henry was about to answer when the king's cane came down on the table with a terrific bang, and all general conversation ceased until his Majesty should see fit to set it going. Until the Tabagians had become drunk, conversation was directed to and by the king, but when the honorable body had swallowed a sufficient amount of beer to loosen its tongues, pandemonium set it, and every man talked until he was hoarse, or until he could talk no more. Members often slept the night through in their chairs or under the table, and the king frequently required help in going to his apartments.

When his Majesty began to smoke, pipes and tobacco came down the line, and for a quarter of an hour the Tabagians puffed in silence as if they were trying to get up steam. The Crown Prince sat at his father's left, sullenly doing his best to smoke the intolerably strong tobacco used by the king and his friends. Grumkow was on his Majesty's right, and Field Marshal Seckendorf was next to Prince Fritz. The Margrave and Henry sat modestly at the foot of the table, facing the king.

A silence, which for some reason seemed ominous to Henry, accompanied the smoking of the first pipe. The long whispered conversation that had taken place between the king, Grumkow and Seckendorf seemed in some mysterious way to have oozed into the stillness, and the smoke that filled the room seemed to float in threatening clouds laden with impending trouble. The affair of the night before, when Henry and Fritz were returning from Ritter's—when the Crown Prince spoke of the happiness that would ensue from his father's death—constantly intruded itself on Henry's thoughts. The whispered consultation, the ominous silence, the king's determination earlier in the evening to have the Crown Prince at The Tabagie, all pointed to serious trouble

for the poor little prince. If the trouble should prove to be the outgrowth of the encounter on the way home from Ritter's, Henry might be involved in the storm to come

The king smoked his first pipe, and when it was finished called in thunderous tones: "Tobacco!" His pipe was refilled, he puffed violently for a moment, and said in rasping, guttural tones:

"General Grumkow has a matter to lay before The Tabagie."

Grumkow rose to his feet, hung his head for a moment as if in prayer, and said in slowly spoken, measured words that seemed to come from a heart of grief:

"Your Majesty and gentlemen of The Tabagie: It is my painful duty to make a charge of treason against the Crown Prince of Prussia."

"Stand up!" cried the king, addressing his son and striking the table with his cane. Fritz rose and Grumkow continued:

"Last night his Royal Highness, after spending the evening in revel and debauch with disreputable associates in the city, was returning to the palace accompanied by an unknown man. True and trusted agents of his Majesty followed the two revelers and overheard the false son,

the traitorous prince, the treasonable soldier express the wish that the king were dead, and utter a diabolical intention to kill his Majesty. He declared furthermore that our gracious ruler, who is the wisest king in all the world, whose wisdom has not been equaled by any king since the days of Solomon, whose greatness has not been matched since Alexander, was mad, insane and irresponsible, that he should be killed, deposed and set aside, and that he, the said false son, the traitorous prince, should occupy the throne of his wise, gentle, just and merciful father."

To illustrate his gentleness, Majesty rose to his feet and struck at the Crown Prince with the royal cane. Little Fritz stepped back, avoiding the blow, which fell on the table. Had it fallen on his head, there might have been no need for further parley. Having missed his aim, the king mercifully resumed his seat, glaring about him and frothing at the mouth. When quiet was restored, Grumkow proceeded:

"His Majesty, the most just of men, would be justified in condemning the traitorous prince without a hearing, but the kindest and most indulgent of fathers, through me, now offers his son an opportunity to defend himself."

When Grumkow sat down, the kindest of

fathers rose, lifted his cane and started toward the Crown Prince. Grumkow caught Majesty by the arm, saying:

"I implore your Majesty, for my sake, for the sake of the love I bear you, for the sake of your friends, for the sake of your health, so precious to your loving people, calm yourself, calm, calm, calm!"

One might have thought that Grumkow was a neat-herd, striving to quiet an angry bull.

The king allowed himself to be "calmed", and instead of striking the prince, struck the table, at the same time screaming to his son:

"What have you to say, you—you—you rascal? What—have—you—you—you blackguard —what have you to say?"

"Nothing," answered Fritz.

After waiting to give the prince time to speak, Grumkow rose and continued his harangue:

"It is as I supposed. The Crown Prince has nothing to say—nothing. I am inclined to believe that it is to the prince's honor that he can say nothing in defense of his treasonable, unnatural words, and now his Majesty wishes me to ask these assembled friends for their help, their counsel and their prayers. Speak plainly, friends, I pray you. Speak without fear. If you

have aught to say in defense, in justification, in palliation of the Crown Prince's conduct, say it freely, plainly, truthfully, as I speak. If you have aught to say against him, speak with like candor. Your king needs and implores your help in this his hour of trouble. Pray to God for light that your advice may be true, that your words may be words of wisdom, and that your motives may be inspired from on high."

Grumkow again hung his head as if in prayer, and took his seat.

Before any one else could rise, Fritz Henry was on his feet.

"At what hour last night were the words imputed to his Highness supposed to have been uttered?" he asked.

No answer. Henry appealed directly to the king: "Will your Majesty tell me at what hour the Crown Prince is supposed to have uttered the treasonable words charged by Baron Grumkow?"

The expression of terror that had come to the prince's face gave place to one of glad surprise and gratitude. The king nodded to Grumkow, and that worthy limb of Satan rose, addressing his Majesty.

"The horrid words, your Majesty, were uttered last night between the hours of nine and

ten o'clock. The three men who heard them are waiting in the anteroom to give their evidence. The three worthy agents of your Majesty were all grievously wounded by the Crown Prince and his companion. Perhaps the companion was this—this captain of your Majesty's Grenadiers." Turning to Henry, Grumkow continued sneeringly: "What do you know about the charge against the Crown Prince, and what have you to say concerning it? Let your remarks be brief, sir, and give place to your elders."

"My remarks shall be brief, your Majesty, very brief," said Henry. "They will consist of the simple statement that the charge against the Crown Prince is false—a lie from beginning to end, manufactured out of whole cloth by those who seek to ruin his Highness."

Grumkow sprang to his feet, shouting frantic invectives against Fritz Henry, and instantly a tremendous commotion arose in The Tabagie. Grumkow's face was black with rage; the little minister was screaming at the top of his voice, calling down God's wrath upon Henry's head. The devoted tools of Grumkow were shouting, cursing, clamoring and shaking their fists at Henry, who stood calmly at the foot of the table. After two or three minutes of tremen-

Instantly a tremendous commotion arose in The Tabagie

dous uproar, the king brought his cane down on the table to command silence and spoke directly to Henry:

"Proceed! Proceed! You're no fool! If you say it is a lie, you have good reason for saying so. Proceed, and if any man interrupts you, he shall get my stick across his head." Then he sat down, mumbling to himself: "He's not afraid of the devil."

"My reason, your Majesty, is this," said Henry. "I was with the Crown Prince all yesterday evening. I supped with him at six o'clock, and—"

"—And I, too, was with him," cried the Margrave of Schwedt, springing to his feet, climbing to his chair and thence to the table. "My friend, the brave captain here, and I supped with the Crown Prince, and remained with his royal Highness in his room from supper time until near the hour of nine, when we went to the queen's parlor, where we remained till the hour of eleven o'clock. Your Majesty was there at nine o'clock and saw us. Your Majesty needs no other evidence than your own memory to clear the Crown Prince of this false charge. My friend here is right. Who makes the charge against the Crown Prince lies."

"I hope so," said the king, with a sigh.

His Majesty rose, pointed his cane toward Fritz Henry, and asked: "Do you vouch for the truth of what the Margrave of Schwedt has just said?"

Henry would not convict the Margrave of a lie, even though it was a blessed one, so he tried to find a way to confirm his statement, at least in substance, without vouching for its truth in detail. He had determined to tell the exact truth about the visit to Ritter's, the return to the palace, and the attack from behind the fence. He intended denying that the prince had uttered the exact words with which he was charged. He could have done so truthfully, but he intended also to lie unhesitatingly if the occasion demanded.

After the Margrave had uttered his elaborate falsehood, Henry could not tell the real truth of the situation without convicting Adolph. To do so would fasten the charge more firmly on the prince, and might involve Henry and the Margrave in the difficulty The exact truth, after all, was not so much a question of detail as of main fact. Did the prince speak the treasonable words as charged? He did not. All these considerations quickly passed through Fritz Henry's mind, and he answered the king:

"The Margrave speaks the truth. The

Crown Prince did not utter the treasonable words, of which Baron Grumkow accuses him, between the hours of six and eleven o'clock last night, unless he did so in the queen's parlor between the hours of nine and eleven. Your Majesty was there during that time and must have seen the prince. I now declare that any man who asserts that the prince spoke the words with which he is charged, lies, and I am willing to make good my words in court or with my sword."

"I thank God for sending me a man who is not afraid to speak his mind in plain, unvarnished words," growled the king. "A lie is a lie wherever it is found, and it ought to be called a lie. Why mince the matter with delicate words? Plain words suit me; plain words spoken plainly. This fellow would slap the devil in the face. You hear, Grumkow, what he and the Margrave say. They say it is a lie, and that the man who asserts it lies. I remember seeing my son in the queen's parlor before nine o'clock and after ten. What have you to say?"

Grumkow rose and said with deep humility: "I do not make the charge against the Crown Prince, your Majesty. I state only what others have told me. My informants may be wrong.

They may have been mistaken when, in their zeal for your Majesty, they supposed it was the Crown Prince who uttered the treasonable words. Doubtless they were mistaken. The noble Margrave of Schwedt and—and his friend must be right. They could not easily be wrong. Your Majesty could not possibly be wrong, and I offer thanks to God that those who, through their zeal for your Majesty, made this charge, *are* wrong."

After a long hesitancy the king spoke, mumbling his words to the table: "But you would have been more thankful if the Margrave and his friend had not spoken."

Grumkow's favor was tottering. It had tottered many times before, but he had always saved it; he would doubtless be able to do so again by frankly acknowledging his grave error, by punishing the men who had "misled" him, and by justifying his mistake on the ground that it grew out of his great love and his tender solicitude for Prussian Majesty.

When Grumkow sat down, the king rose from his chair, walked around the table to where Henry was standing, and embraced him. Turning, he paused for a moment, and said, as if speaking to himself: "He's not afraid of the devil! *Ach, Gott!* Not afraid of the devil!"

That was the highest praise Frederick William could bestow on any man.

Having delivered himself of these words, Prussian Majesty hobbled back to his chair, with tears in his eyes and rumblings in his throat. When, after a great effort and a deal of growling, Majesty was again seated, he beckoned the Crown Prince to the chair on his left, struck the table a blow with his cane, and cried in thunderous tones: "Beer!"

The Crown Prince was very happy when he resumed his seat beside his father, and he drank the sour beer as if he liked it, though the greater part of each stein went under the table. Beer soon clarified the atmosphere, but The Tabagie adjourned early that evening, and the Margrave and Henry went to their rooms in the attic.

The Margrave stopped at Henry's room, sat on the bed for a moment in silent meditation, and then began to laugh softly.

"*Ach, Gott,* what a noise it made, and what a lie it was—large and black! What a lie was that we told!"

Henry was inclined to laugh at the Margrave's use of the word "we", for the lie was Adolph's sole and separate property, though Henry had in a way adopted it by confirmation.

"The Crown Prince and I were at Ritter's last night," said Henry.

"*Der Teufel!*" exclaimed Adolph. "Then Grumkow told the truth?"

"No, he did not," said Henry, "for the Crown Prince did not use the language charged by Grumkow. But we did visit Ritter's yesterday evening and were attacked on the way home. If we wish to avoid trouble, the Ritter's should be informed of what took place at The Tabagie, so that they may not spoil our lie if Grumkow questions them."

"Right! You're right!" exclaimed the Margrave. "Let us go to Ritter's at once. To-morrow may be too late."

"Can we pass the palace gates without the word for the night?" asked Henry.

"There is a postern to which I have a key. We'll go and return that way," answered Adolph.

Without further delay, Henry and the Margrave went to Ritter's, awakened the good friends, explained the situation, and received assurances that Grumkow should learn nothing from them.

When Henry reached his room, he opened the door, entered in the dark and found a man sitting in the window.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Henry, grasping the hilt of his sword.

"I'm waiting to thank you, and to beg you to forgive me," answered the man, who proved to be the Crown Prince. "I am so humiliated when I think of the manner in which I treated you that I am almost ready to fall on my knees, if necessary, to gain your pardon. My sister and I doubted you because you have enjoyed my father's favor and have fallen a victim to Don't Care's wiles, but my doubt has vanished for all time, and my sister's confidence will return when I tell her of what you did for me this evening. You saved my life."

"Surely your life was not in danger," said Henry.

"It was," returned the prince. "Grumkow and my father are eager to fasten the charge of treason on me, and they thought they had it until you spoiled their fine scheme."

"It was the Margrave who spoiled it," suggested Henry.

"No, no, it was you," insisted the prince. "No other man's word would have been taken by the king. You seem to have thrown a spell over him. Mina says it is the spell of a brave heart."

If the little prince could have seen Henry's

face, he might have learned an interesting fact from the joy it showed when Wilhelmina's name was mentioned.

"Why do you and the Princess Wilhelmina believe I have fallen a victim to the wiles of the Princess Charlotte?" asked Henry.

"Did you not meet her at the new fountain in the west garden?" asked Fritz.

"Yes."

"Why did you meet her at that secluded spot if—if—"

"I can't explain," interrupted Henry.

After a moment's thought, the prince exclaimed:

"Ah! I understand; I understand. The Margrave said she asked you to meet her, and of course you could not refuse. You won't explain at her expense. I wondered how you could think twice of Don't Care when Wilhelmina is smiling on you, as she certainly does." Henry remained silent, though the prince's words made him want to shout for joy. "But, my friend," continued the prince, "let me warn you. Mina's smiles are the most beautiful and the most dangerous in the world. Her beauty, with its veil of sadness, her intellect, her tender heart, her fear of giving pain, and her yearning to make every one happy have filled many a

heart with the pain of love. She is not a coquette, and I am sure has never smiled on any man to gain his love, but in some way she seems to win it from all who come near her."

"The Princess Charlotte told me as much," answered Henry, hardly conscious of his words.

"Did she?" exclaimed the prince. "So? Don't Care has begun her campaign against Mina already?"

"I should say the Princess Charlotte had paid her sister a great compliment," returned Henry.

"I know the spirit in which the compliment was paid," said the Crown Prince, "and doubtless you, too, understood. But don't misunderstand Mina's smiles. She smiles on Adolph because she pities him. She will probably be his wife before many months. The thought almost drives me mad, and the marriage, if accomplished, will kill the fairest girl on earth."

"It would be a crime," said Henry; "and the king will not permit it."

"He will compel it," returned Fritz. "The poor girl will soon have to marry Frederick of England, whom she loathes, the Margrave of Schwedt, or the Duke of Weissenfels. The Margrave is the least, by far the least, of these

evils. If the duke falls to her lot, I believe it will be my duty to kill him or her. The Margrave seems to be her only hope, and if the king learns of Adolph's blessed lie, my sister will soon become the Duchess of Weissenfels."

The prince again thanked Henry, and left him with material for thought that would last till morning.

When Henry lay down that night, the panorama of the last few weeks passed before his mind. He recalled his first meeting with the Margrave of Schwedt at the country inn, remembering vividly how absurd Adolph's pretensions had then appeared. As the past merged into the present, he thought of his own great change of heart toward the Margrave, and viewed with fear—almost with consternation—his altered feeling toward the princess. At the inn Henry had despised Adolph; now he loved him. At the inn Wilhelmina was but a name to the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth; now, after the lapse of a few short weeks, she had become everything.

Henry knew that the timely help he had given the Crown Prince would touch Wilhelmina's heart, and would give a lasting quality to her faith. He also felt and feared that it might win for him her love, in which case his own

heart would be filled with a burden of unhappiness that would last him all his days.

Henry could not forget the Margrave's part in the affair, and knew that Adolph's lie would hang like a halo about the poor fellow's head, and glorify him in Mina's eyes. The evening's work might intensify Wilhelmina's love for Henry, but it would also make it much easier for the king to bend her to his will when the order should go forth for her to become the Margravine of Schwedt.

Taking it all in all, the last few weeks of Henry's life had developed good cause for unhappiness, and he knew that his only safety lay in retreat from Berlin.

CHAPTER XII

TOO MANY PRINCESSES

The following day Adolph handed Henry a letter. The only signature was "Your Friend," but Henry knew at once that it was from the Princess Wilhelmina. It said: "I thank you. Your words yesterday evening sank deep into my heart. I shall never forget them, even for one moment. Your Friend."

Henry read the brief note over and over, forgetting, for the time, the Margrave who stood beside him; forgetting everything but the letter before him. The words the princess referred to in her note were those Henry had spoken to her. The meaning was so luminous to him that he drew the paper away hastily when the Margrave attempted to read it.

"Forgive me," said Adolph, when his inspection of the note was interrupted. "I did not realize what I was doing. She never wrote a line to me, and do you know, I am almost jealous of you."

Poor Adolph's face plainly showed his distress, so Henry hastened to relieve him by saying:

"You need not be jealous. The princess simply thanks me for my words in her brother's behalf yesterday evening."

Henry handed over the note, and Adolph, putting on his immense spectacles, read it.

"That is about what she *said* to me," remarked the Margrave, sighing and smiling. "I wish she had written it to me. Let me keep the note. It is not addressed to you. I will make myself believe it was written to me, and how happy I shall be. I'll kiss it every hour in the day."

Henry regretted to part with the note, for it would make him happy, too, but if she had used the language of the note to the Margrave, the "words" referred to might be those uttered by Henry on behalf of Fritz at The Tabagie. Henry was beginning to doubt the meaning of the note, and soon convinced himself that his first construction could not be the right one. He did not want the Margrave to know that he greatly valued the note, so he said:

"Keep it, Margrave."

Adolph tried to kiss Henry's cheek, but could not reach it by ten or twelve inches, so he kissed a button of his coat, and said:

"You save my life. Once more am I happy. No longer am I jealous. I thought for a mo-

ment that you had fallen in love with her, but now I know I was wrong. To lose her and to lose my friend both in one moment would have broken my heart."

Henry's conscience smote him when he considered the truth of the Margrave's suspicions and the steadfastness of his affection.

"You have not lost your friend, Margrave, I assure you," said Henry.

"No," returned Adolph, "but I wish I could exchange my rank and title for—for you, yourself."

"Then you would never win the princess," answered Henry, laughing.

"That is true, true," returned Adolph, sighing. After a moment's reverie, he declared: "I am going to win not only her, but her love, too. I told you I should when I first met you at the inn. I thought then I loved the princess, but, *lieber Himmel,* my friend, I did not know the meaning of the word! Now I know it all too well, and I do believe I shall die if I fail."

"You said you would not marry her against her will—if she did not love you," suggested Henry.

"Yes, and I meant it at the time," returned Adolph, sighing and rubbing his face with the great red handkerchief. "I would mean it

now, too, if my sacrifice would save her, but listen, friend, listen. She had better marry me than to be cursed all her life long with Weissenfels. I am, you see, the less of two evils. I am, in fact, the least of all the evils that beset the princess. *Ach, Gott!*" he continued, laughing and shaking his head in profound disgust. "There's an honor; there's a privilege; there's a glory for you. To be the least of all evils! Who could ask more? I have always thought that man's ambition should prompt him to be great, even though he can be only a great evil like Grumkow or Weissenfels, but here am I, so fallen and so degraded, so humbled by love that I am content, aye, even delighted, to be the least of all evils. What a very Publican am I!"

Again Adolph paused in reverie, holding his handkerchief half way to his face. He breathed a sigh and continued his speech, which had become almost a soliloquy:

"Is it worth while, this life we all so strive to live? Did God really do us a kindness by placing us here, and when we pray to live, should we not rather say with the priests: 'Thy will be done,' and the quicker, the better. Is death, after all, an evil, or is it the greatest blessing that can come to us, and are we con-

stantly running from it to our own undoing? *Ach, Gott! I* don't know and *I* don't care. But this I *do* know, that poor, suffering humanity would have missed an infinite deal of pain, trouble and degradation if the Creator had seen fit to leave love out of our hearts and imagination out of our brains. But I have the proud distinction of being the least of all evils, and even if the princess does not love me, it is clearly my duty to marry her, and save her from the *worst* of all evils. I have said—much."

"Will the king force her to marry Weissenfels if you refuse her hand?" asked Henry.

"The king is determined to have both his daughters married very soon," answered Adolph. "I am sure the English marriage is broken off forever. Nothing that the queen can do will change his Majesty's purpose. The official notice of withdrawal will be sent this week, and the princess will be given her choice of husbands; but the choice will lie between Weissenfels and me."

The Margrave turned appealingly to Henry: "Tell me, friend, what shall I do? Shall I refuse the beautiful princess because I fear she will be unhappy with me, and thus allow her to fall to the lot of Weissenfels, with whom life would be a torture; or shall I accept her, even

though she come to me reluctantly, and devote my life to making her happy,—at least, to softening her wretchedness? I know that reasons to justify the pursuit of one's great desire come swiftly and in legions, as the wild pigeons fly north in spring-time, but tell me, friend, you, whose logic is not spurred by deep yearning, tell me, am I right? What shall I do? I seek only this woman's happiness. As for myself, it matters not. Wretchedness or happiness, life or death; I tell you, they are one to me if I can bring happiness to the woman I love."

The Margrave placed his hands on Henry's knees, looked wistfully into his face, and after a long pause, continued:

"Put my love out of the question. I am willing to die for her or to live for her. I ask you to tell me which I shall do."

"Only God knows, my noble Adolph," answered Henry. "If Weissenfels is her alternative, you must marry her."

"I agree with you," returned Adolph, sorrowfully. "I have pondered much the question. I have even prayed; yes, I, who do not believe in prayer, have prayed, and have come to this conclusion: I agree with you. Poor girl —and—and, *lieber Himmel,* poor me!"

"Noble you!" said Henry, taking the Margrave's hand.

"Don't, don't," pleaded Adolph, snatching his hand from Henry's grasp. "Don't speak to me so, or I'll cry like a woman, like a baby."

Henry was deeply affected, and wishing to change the subject to one that would be indifferent to them both, asked:

"You say the king has determined to have both his daughters married. Whom has he chosen for the Princess Charlotte?"

"*Ach*, my friend, now I may be sorry for you. You have, I fear, learned to love the little princess?"

"I am happy to say that your fear is groundless, and that I do not stand in need of your sympathy," answered Henry.

"Of course, you would deny it," returned the Margrave, winking knowingly at his friend.

"I might deny it even if true," said Henry, "but it is not true. I assure you the Princess Charlotte is nothing to me, nor do I care whom she weds. I am simply curious to know who has been chosen for her husband. It is a matter of indifference to me."

"No one has been definitely selected," returned Adolph, "but I heard the queen say she would be content with one the king has men-

tioned; one with whom the Princess Charlotte seems delighted—the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth."

Henry was so startled that he sprang from his chair. The new topic was less indifferent to him than he had supposed it would be. Indeed, it was so intensely interesting that he could not for a moment grasp the thought. The offer of the Princess Charlotte's hand to the Hereditary Prince, if made, would have to be accepted. Henry's life was becoming complex, but the last evil that threatened, if it came to pass, would effectually solve all problems and reduce all complications to a painful condition of simplicity.

"When, where and how, in God's name, did the scheme of marriage with the Prince of Bayreuth originate?" asked Henry, resuming his chair and trying to speak calmly.

"I believe it was suggested a week ago by the Princess Charlotte herself," answered Adolph. "The king told her he intended to have her married soon, and she was very much pleased. 'Oh, do find me a husband!' she cried delightedly. 'There is the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, who, I have heard, is a large man and very handsome.' 'The very man! What says Feekin?' asked the king, turning to his wife.

The queen, for once in her life, agreed with her husband, and after discussing the question for a few minutes, it was settled among them in a way. Don't Care is much more stubborn and willful than her sister, and her father knows that he might kill her, but he could not force her to marry against her will. Even the king is powerless when Don't Care says 'I won't', and he is practically helpless when she says 'I will'. Therefore, in choosing a husband, their Majesties will consult her, for her consent will be necessary."

"Have negotiations been opened?" asked Henry, anxiously.

"I think not," replied Adolph. "Negotiations of that nature usually are born and discussed in The Tabagie. There was no mention of it last night, as you know. The Princess Charlotte is not yet seventeen, and perhaps the king is not in so great a hurry to marry her off as he imagines he is. The thought has got into her head, however, and probably she will bring the marriage about, as she seems to have heard that the Hereditary Prince is a rare fine fellow. I understand that he is very poor, very long, very lean and very stupid—dull and heavy in the head, you understand."

Henry nodded to intimate that he understood,

and the Margrave continued: "If the princess learns that the Hereditary Prince is a disagreeable person and a fool, all negotiations will be broken off, for a thousand Frederick Williams could not force that little mite of a girl into a marriage that did not suit her. When she learns the truth, Bayreuth will be mentioned no more in Berlin Palace."

"I wish the Princess Wilhelmina had a dash of her willfulness," said Henry.

"*Ach,* yes," returned Adolph, sighing, "but if she had, she would not be Wilhelmina. When she refuses to obey, she brings her father's heavy hand not only on herself, but on her brother and her friends. She must obey or others will suffer. If she alone were concerned, I imagine you would find her strong enough to take care of herself. Her love for her brother Fritz and her devotion to her friends are the old king's weapons against her, and Mina must obey—she must obey."

After the Margrave left, Henry locked the door of his room and lay down on the bed to think it all out. The Margrave's suggestion concerning the personality of the Prince of Bayreuth had given him a valuable hint, and after an hour's meditation, he formulated at least one plan which he hoped would prevent the

offer of Don't Care's hand. He had another in reserve if the first plan failed.

The fates seemed to be as perverse in threatening to force upon Henry the princesses he did not want as they were cruel in withholding the one he wanted. One advantage only lay with the first-named difficulty; he could run away from it. The second seemed impossible to surmount.

After carefully thinking over his plans, Henry rose, dressed for parade, and hurried to the barracks. The regiment was brought out, and he was soon in the midst of military maneuvers.

The day was pleasant and many ladies in carriages were watching the drill. In one of the carriages were the queen and the Princesses Wilhelmina and Charlotte.

When Henry's duties were finished, he rode near the royal carriage and was greeted formally by the queen, kindly by Wilhelmina, and effusively by Don't Care.

"Oh, stop by our carriage," cried the little princess.

Henry dismounted, moved a few steps nearer, lifted his chapeau, and asked:

"Have I her Majesty's permission?"

The queen nodded consent, and Henry, with

his bridle rein over his arm, stood uncovered by the carriage while Don't Care chatted, chattered, smiled and dimpled entertainingly.

Presently she said: "Perhaps I am to be married." She threw back her head and laughed as if it were a huge joke.

"Is that true?" asked Henry. "I congratulate your Highness. Has the fortunate man's name been announced?"

"Oh, yes," cried the princess. "He is the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth."

Henry wondered if the little princess suspected that he was the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth. The thought was so full of trouble that he was hardly conscious of what he said when he asked:

"Is it definitely settled?"

"Oh, yes," responded Don't Care, laughing and shrugging her shoulders; "I am delighted, and no one else need be considered unless it be the prince. Of course, he, too, will be delighted. But in this case the fates seem propitious, for the king and the queen also are pleased. It is a marvel of marvels that they agree. Yes, it is all arranged, or will be very soon."

The last clause brought a sigh of relief from Henry's lips, so audible that Don't Care heard it and accepted it as a tribute to her charms.

"Are you not jealous of the prince? I am anxious to see him. I have heard that he is a fine, large, handsome man. Some one said that he is stupid, but if he is big and handsome, I'll be satisfied. I hope to see him soon."

"Perhaps you will change your mind when you see him," suggested Henry, taking the first step in his plan of self-defense.

"Ah, do you know him—tell me, do you know him?" asked Don't Care, eagerly.

"I have often seen him, and know him slightly, as a man of my rank may know one of his exalted station," answered Henry.

"Yes, yes, tell me," pleaded Don't Care.

"He is large," answered Henry, "but the Duke of Weissenfels, whom he resembles, is an Apollo compared to him."

At that moment the king arrived; Henry became silent, and presently took his leave.

Soon after leaving the queen's carriage, Henry met Grumkow, and that interesting villain favored him with a view of his back. Henry mentioned the fact a few minutes later to the Crown Prince, who said:

"I was sure that Grumkow would resent your language at The Tabagie. He had a fine scheme concocted to behead me, but you spoiled

it. He never forgets nor forgives, and I fear you are in danger."

"I agree with you, but I see no way to avert trouble unless I choke Grumkow or run away," answered Henry, laughing.

"Nor do I," responded Fritz. "I am glad you find the situation amusing, and am more than pleased that you can laugh at it. I don't just see how you are going to strangle Grumkow, but if I were you, 'run away' would be the word. You must take your chances, and desperate they are, if you remain in Berlin. You have said that if you wish to leave, you may do so, and that you have nothing to gain by remaining. Take my advice; go. Why do you remain? I hope you have not fallen under the spell of Mina's eyes and smile."

"I, too, hope not," interrupted Henry, smiling.

"You are different from other men who have approached her, and your appeal might be stronger than any she has ever felt; but, my dear captain, remember that she is not for you, and that sentiment between you and her would be worse than wasted. You, perhaps, have not yet felt the full force of her charm. Leave before you do, for in all the world there is no

woman so gentle, beautiful and strong as my sister Wilhelmina, nor so dangerous."

"I know the truth of all you say," returned Henry, "and I hope I am not so great a fool as to forget it."

Fine, strong words were those in Henry's mouth, but they were only words.

CHAPTER XIII

MINE ADVERSARY WRITES A LETTER

THREE or four evenings after the incident of the parade ground, Henry was talking to Don't Care in the Mirrored Chamber, where the queen was giving a ball. The little princess had found no opportunity early in the evening to speak privately with him, having been surrounded by a swarm of admirers, but when he came up to claim a cotillion, she whispered hurriedly:

"Meet me again at the new fountain early to-morrow morning. I want to see you. I have news of great importance. Grumkow hates you. Beware of him. I also want you to tell me of the Prince of Bayreuth. If he is hideous, I will have none of him. If he were like you, he should never get away from me. Why were you not born a prince?"

"When I see your Highness looking so beautiful, and when you speak to me so graciously, I do wish I had been born a prince, although I have no other reason for desiring it. The life of a prince is not all sunshine. I shall be at

the new fountain very early to-morrow morning."

"Ah," whispered Don't Care, laughing softly, and shrugging her shoulders in the belief that her charms had at last driven caution from Fritz Henry's breast, and had captured his heart for her own uses and purposes. The small princess was convinced that her charms were omnipotent, and her surprise was not that Henry had yielded to them, but that he had not surrendered at the first onslaught.

The prospect of the second meeting at the fountain was as welcome to Henry as the first had been repugnant. It would give him an opportunity to set in operation his plan, and to hear Don't Care's warning against Grumkow, which he felt sure was one to be heeded.

Soon after the interview with Don't Care, Henry had the great happiness of dancing a cotillion with Wilhelmina, and, in the brief rests, the greater happiness of exchanging a few words with her.

When the opportunity came, she said: "In my note, I fear, I did not tell you of my gratitude for the service you rendered my brother at The Tabagie. I have heard none of the particulars except that Grumkow charged the prince with having spoken treason against

the king, and that you told Grumkow he lied. Oh, it must have been grand! I wish I could have seen you. The king is always saying that you do not fear the devil, and I believe he is right, for Grumkow surely is Satan incarnate. Sonnsfeld tells me that you said you had been with the prince in his room all the evening, and that my brother did not use the treasonable words of which Grumkow accused him."

"The Margrave and I made a combined statement, regardless of truth," answered Henry, who supposed the princess knew that their evidence had been furnished to meet the needs of the occasion. Wilhelmina's eyes opened in wonder, and she groped about for a moment, seeking an explanation. Suddenly her face lighted beautifully; her eyes took on a softened luster, and she said under her breath:

"Then you told a—a falsehood for my brother's sake."

"For your sake," interrupted Henry.

Mina glanced quickly at Henry's face, looked as quickly to the floor, and answered:

"It was a blessed lie. I did not know how great my debt was. I don't know yet. I can't measure it. I can only feel that I thank you. I *do* thank you, for I believe you saved my

brother's life. How came you to think of it so quickly?"

"The Margrave first uttered the black lie," said Henry, laughing softly, "and I confirmed it."

"No, no," protested the princess. "My brother told Kate that you sprang to your feet before any one else had an opportunity to speak, and denounced Grumkow's statement as a lie. How grand you must have looked! Fritz said he would give his right to the crown to be as tall and to look as grand as you when you bearded Grumkow and my father in their den, and defied them for the sake of one who had not always treated you kindly."

The princess blushed before she had finished speaking, for her enthusiasm had run away with her tongue. Her eyes, too, said a great deal more than she had intended they should—a great deal that filled Henry's heart with joy. He had, however, too much good sense to presume on the girl's hasty words and unguarded glances, so after a long pause, he said:

"I supposed you knew all that was done and said at The Tabagie. In your kind note, you said my words had sunk deep into your heart. Therfore I thought you knew."

Henry was angling, though his hook and bait

were cunningly concealed. He accomplished his purpose, for the beautiful girl looked up at his face, instantly dropped her eyes before his gaze, hesitated for a moment, and said in clear, soft tones:

"I did not mean the words you spoke at The Tabagie."

Henry's heart was filled with ecstasy, but he restrained himself and said only:

"I dare not try to speak my gratitude, but you must know."

"Yes," said the girl, softly. "My greatest grief is that I ever doubted you."

They stood in silence for a moment, and were glad when the dancing was resumed, for they could not trust themselves to speak again.

When the figure was finished, the queen rose and the ball closed, much to the relief of Mina and Henry, who wanted to be alone to indulge in the sweet memories of the evening.

Henry's joy was almost pain. To have won the girl's love with no possibility of possessing her was like gazing hopelessly into paradise from the other place. He found no relief in calling himself a fool for having remained in Berlin, for after all was said, he was still willing to remain, and to suffer any evil if he could be of help to the princess.

How he could help her, he did not know, but the mere chance was sufficient to make pain for her sake a joy. In any case, the mischief, as far as he was concerned, was done. The princess had taken her place in his heart, there to remain, and he could not relieve himself of the burden by trying to run away from it. He could not help thinking of the Margrave's love, and pity for Adolph added pain to a stricken conscience whenever thoughts of the simple, kindly soul thrust themselves forward and would not be put down.

Henry revolted against meeting Don't Care in the morning, but he could not afford to lose the opportunity to thwart the king's scheme of marriage with Bayreuth, and dared not fail to learn Don't Care's news of Grumkow, which he believed would come directly from Ramen, who was Grumkow's sweetheart. Henry's position was unique. On the one hand was the girl he loved but could not marry; and on the other hand was one he despised, but would be compelled to accept if he did not succeed in defeating the king's purposes.

By cajolery or storm, the Princess Charlotte had always had her way with the king. She was the only person who enjoyed that unique privilege, and Henry felt that the Prince of

Bayreuth would be safe, at least for a time, if Captain Churchill could capture her fancy by a negative mode of wooing, part flattery, part pretended fear and part indifference. That which Don't Care could not possess was the thing she ardently longed for. The man whom she could not bring to her feet would soon have her at his feet, Henry felt sure. Her love might be a dangerous thing to possess, but it was safer to try for it than to allow negotiations to be opened with Bayreuth. Henry's only hope of escape from Don't Care was to prevent the offer of her hand, and one of his plans to bring about that end was to win her wayward fancy as the Handsome Captain.

His first plan seemed feasible when Don't Care said she would not marry the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth if he was not handsome and agreeable. But Henry determined to try both plans next morning. Having settled the question, he tried to go to sleep, and after a weary time, succeeded.

Mina, too, went to her own room, and while Sonnsfeld was busy with preparations for the night, suddenly covered her face with her hands and broke forth in tears.

"What is the trouble, *liebling?*" asked the

maid, tenderly kissing her mistress. "Tell me why you are so unhappy."

"I am not unhappy, Kate," answered the girl, trying to check her tears. "That is, I am both happy and unhappy. Never in all my life have I been so happy, and never have I been so miserable, so hopeless. Oh, Kate, for the first time in my life, I want to die! I want to die!"

"Is it the Handsome Captain, Mina?" asked Kate.

"Yes," sobbed the girl. "At last, I told him. I could remain silent no longer. With me it was both the torrent and the tide."

"Ah, Mina," exclaimed Sonnsfeld, taking the girl in her arms.

"Yes," returned the princess, sobbing. "I could not help telling him; that is, I could not help speaking so plainly that he could not misunderstand. He did not ask me to speak. *He* told me long ago, and said that he asked no return, not even one kind word."

"It is a rare lover, Mina, that asks only the privilege of giving," said Kate. "But usually, in the end he receives as much as he gives. Nothing brings so great a reward as unselfish love."

Mina was silent for a moment, then resting her head on Sonnsfeld's breast, whispered:

"I could not hold out against him when he gave so much to my brother and to me, and asked nothing in return; it would have been selfish. So I gave him all I have to give—my love, and—and I am glad—glad. Before this came to me I was unhappy when my father spoke of marriage, but now the double torture of losing the man I love and of marrying the one I cannot love, and at times almost loathe, will kill me, I fear."

"The English treaty, I hear, is to be abrogated," said Kate, "and you will be freed from the fear of marriage, at least, for a time."

"No, I shall not be free," returned the princess. "The English marriage will be abandoned, but Ramen told the queen this morning that Grumkow said I should be ordered to choose at once between the Margrave of Schwedt and the Duke of Weissenfels."

"God is good, and He will not permit that great crime to be perpetrated. Do not fear. He will open a door of escape," said Kate.

"I hope He will," answered Mina, "but He seems to have forgotten me. Wherein can I have sinned so grievously that I deserve my unhappy lot?"

"You have not sinned, *liebling,*" returned Sonnsfeld, kissing Mina's cheek.

"I must have sinned," sobbed Mina, "for in all the world, I am the most unhappy woman."

"*Ach, liebling,* it is our lot—our lot," said Kate, tears falling gently over her cheeks. "I never see a girl baby that I do not pity the poor little human mite, and wonder in which of a thousand forms unhappiness will come to her. We pay a frightful price for our womanhood, but God is good. He knows best and His will be done."

The next morning when Henry awakened, he was anxious to see Don't Care, and though he was early at the fountain, he found the beautiful little princess waiting for him.

"You see how shamefully eager I am," she said, holding out her hands to him.

Henry kissed the tips of her fingers most formally.

"*Ach,* not my hands, man, not my hands!" she cried, laughing and stepping close to him. But he failed to understand the invitation, and replied:

"I see how gracious and how condescending your Highness is in granting me this interview. I can hardly bring myself to believe that the beautiful Princess Charlotte has so greatly honored me. If I did not know my danger, I

should indeed be in peril of a broken heart, but forewarned is forearmed, and your Highness need not fear that I shall lose my head."

"Oh, but I want you to lose not only your head, but your—" She touched his breast over his heart, and smiled invitingly.

"My heart may be beyond my control," answered Henry, laughing nervously. (The nervousness was, of course, assumed.) "But unless I also lose my head, my heart's secret, if there should be one, shall remain safe under lock and key, and would not dare intrude itself upon a gracious princess."

"Your prudence and caution anger me," said Don't Care, pettishly, "and I half believe they are affected."

"In that case, I must ask your Highness's permission to take my leave," said Henry, bowing and taking a step backward.

"You surely are the most exasperating of men," cried Don't Care, pouting and turning her back on Henry.

"Of all things, I should most regret to exasperate your Highness. Therefore, I had better go. If I had been wise, I should not have come."

Thus adroitly leading the princess, yet ever retreating from her, Henry held the situation

in hand until he found an opportunity to introduce the name of the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth.

"Oh, tell me all about him," demanded Don't Care. "Is he handsome?"

"I must not speak of your future husband unless I can speak flatteringly," responded Henry.

"Yes, yes, you shall! You shall!" she cried, stamping her foot impatiently and pouting exquisitely. "Tell me, I command you! Is he a handsome man?"

"Far from it. He is very tall and was very thin when I knew him some years ago. He resembles the Duke of Weissenfels much,—as the Margrave would say."

"*Ach, Gott,* I'll have none of him!" cried the little princess. "Tell me more about him. Is he strong?"

"I believe he is not," answered Henry. "He is very tall but his health is poor, and I have been told that his breath is nauseating. His teeth are very bad, and one of his eyes rolls about in his head, independent of the other. But I hear he is very honest, kind of heart, and very pious."

"*Himmel,* that is all that's needed!" cried the little princess, averting her face, and holding up her hands as if warding off an evil.

"That is all that is needed. I might have endured his other defects, but the pious man is like the mosquito; his buzz, buzz, buzz is varied only by an irritating sting when the opportunity comes. No pious husband for me—a Turk first, please. When ostentatious piety takes possession of a man, it supplants all other virtues and stimulates all other vices. I'll have none of our friend of Bayreuth, and I'll tell my father and Grumkow as much this day."

She moved closer to Henry and continued: "Now I'll tell you my news. Grumkow is your enemy and seeks to destroy you. Ramen says you offended him at The Tabagie. There was some trouble about Fritz."

"Yes, yes, I know," said Henry. "Please tell me all you have heard, and your Highness may be sure I shall be grateful."

The little princess, leaning affectionately against Henry, continued her story:

"Grumkow wrote a letter to his lady-love, Ramen, and I accidentally found it. There is nothing like a letter as a weapon of offense and defense. Some one in the Bible said: 'Oh, that mine adversary had written a book!' or a letter, or something. He was wise. I have the letter; your enemy has written it, and it tells the whole

story. But you must promise to tell no one that I showed it to you."

"I promise."

"Well, here it is," said Don't Care, unhooking her bodice and bringing forth the letter from her corsage.

Henry read to himself as follows:

"Dear Mistress: You doubtless have heard ere this of the manner in which the king's new favorite, a low-bred fellow, offered me insult at The Tabagie, and thwarted my plan to entrap the Little One. Old Stumpy was ready to act. Seckendorf and I had worked the crazy old fool almost to the point of frenzy. He swallowed our story, which I believe was almost if not quite true, hook and bait. If this low fellow that has caught the king's fancy had kept still, a trial for treason would now be in progress, and our august master would be growing more violent hour by hour.

"We must be rid of this long captain. Therefore, I write to ask you to keep watch on him for any word or act that may discredit him with the king. If he loses the king's favor, we shall find a way to hang him quickly enough. The Little Hussy will soon marry the Fat Fool or the Lean Idiot, I care not which. Then the

Old One will hang the Little One. That will arouse the people against Stumpy and his reign will come to an end soon afterwards. The Fat One will be made king, but your friend will be the real king, and you, the fairest of women, shall be the real queen. But first we must rid ourselves of this troublesome captain. I am sure your sharp eyes and quick wit will soon accomplish that small matter by discovering or inventing a charge against him that the king will believe. Bear in mind my oft repeated admonition: burn this letter.

"With deep affection,

"Your devoted Grumkow."

Henry's sensations on reading the letter were a mixture of horror and joy; horror because of the black villainy it betrayed; joy because the letter had fallen into his hands, and would fill Don't Care's definition of a weapon of defense so completely as to leave little to be desired.

"I thank your Highness with all my heart for giving me this," said Henry, folding the letter. "It will be my safeguard, and to you I shall owe the fact that I am both warned and armed. I do indeed thank you for giving it to me."

"Oh, but I don't give it to you!" cried Don't

Care, reaching out her hand for the letter. "I did not read it all. I had only time to glance at the first few lines. I saw that they threatened you, so I hid the letter when Ramen approached and brought it to you. I must take it back and put it where I found it. I was glancing through Ramen's boxes, reticules and gowns just to see what I could see, you know—of course, Ramen was not present—and ran across this letter in the pocket of a sleeve. She was a fool not to burn it. Well, I *stole* it, and—and don't you see I must not give it to you? I must put it back where I got it, or Ramen will miss it; then look out for trouble! If there ever was a she-devil, Ramen is one. She would at once suspect me. We have wonderful fights. Mina weeps when Ramen attacks her, but I fight. I love to fight, fight, fight. Oh, I *must* not give it to you. Ramen would kill me."

"Ramen will not dare to mention the letter. You need have no fear on that score," said Henry. "She will not admit she has ever seen it."

"Yes, she will mention it," returned the princess. "She's not only a devil; she is also a fool, and would have no better judgment when angry than to make trouble over the loss of her letter. Oh, I *must* not give it to you!"

Henry was sure that if the princess knew the contents of the letter, she would know that Ramen would not dare to make trouble over its loss, nor to admit, even in the most indirect manner, that she had any knowledge of its existence. But he did not want to impart the contents to Don't Care, for she might go to her father with the perilous and valuable knowledge, and might explode the mine before the time was ripe. Therefore, he determined to try, if possible, to keep the letter without showing it to the princess.

"If your Highness will not do me this great favor—one that may be the means of saving my life—at so small a cost to yourself, I shall bitterly regret having come to meet you, for I shall know what I have already suspected, that your Highness seeks only to make a fool of me, and shall guide myself accordingly hereafter."

Henry's manner clearly expressed a threat. Don't Care hung in the wind for a moment, and asked:

"Will you come to meet me whenever possible if I give you the letter?"

"I run a greater risk from your Highness than from Grumkow," he answered, pretending to be in the depths of a great struggle, "and I

had better return the letter to you and leave Berlin at once."

He had no intention of returning the letter, but wished to relieve himself of all obligation by leading the little princess to beg him to keep it. His purpose was accomplished quickly, for the princess said impetuously:

"Please keep it; keep it, and remain in Berlin. You shall not go."

"I must not remain, your Highness. Take back the letter and I will go, not because I am afraid of Grumkow, but because I fear—"

"No, no, I will not take it," returned the princess, pleadingly. "I beg you to keep it, and I want you to promise that you will not leave Berlin. Keep the letter, but tell no one of it. If Ramen is so great a fool as to accuse me of taking it, I will grow angry. I'll tell her she lies, and if she makes further stir in the matter, I'll threaten to find the letter and take it to my father. I fancy that will silence her. Now keep it and stay here in Berlin with me. I'll not marry Bayreuth—nor any other man, if you wish me to remain single."

Henry, still in imaginary throes, spoke as if in desperation:

"I must leave Berlin, though I promise not to go at once. But I must not remain here

with your Highness a moment longer. I cannot trust myself."

Henry's purpose having been accomplished more completely than he had dared hope for, he hurriedly left the princess in the midst of her entreaties to remain, and went to his room, where he could be alone to think over the marvelous conditions surrounding him.

CHAPTER XIV

HENRY MAKES LOVE FOR THE MARGRAVE

During the month following the important interview with Don't Care, Henry was again busy a great part of the time at Spandau and Potsdam, drilling troops. The king's passion for reviewing his army engrossed his thoughts to an extent that bade fair to supplant all other business of state, so he kept his new captain always by his side.

Since the momentous evening at The Tabagie, Grumkow had refused to speak to Henry, though prior to that stormy scene, the baron had evinced great kindliness for the king's new favorite, hoping, doubtless, to use him. The king, noticing Grumkow's coldness, called Henry's attention to it.

"Grumkow seems to hold resentment against you for having called him a liar," said the king, chuckling in amusement; "it's strange that he should be angry over so small a matter."

Henry made no reply, and after a moment his Majesty remarked: "He is a dangerous enemy."

"I fear no one while I have your Majesty's favor."

"Yes, yes," responded the king, nervously; "but Grumkow is dangerous. He is apt to hatch lies about you, and his lies are so well constructed, and are always backed by such good evidence that—that I am apt to believe them. Yes, by the devil, believe them. I say to myself 'I won't', but in the end I do. I know he is a devil in human form, but he is very adroit, and seems to have little trouble in convincing me that he is an arch-angel—my guardian arch-angel. You once said Grumkow was a fool. You were right, but he is the wisest, shrewdest, most unscrupulous fool on earth. Every king needs a devil in his employ; therefore I keep Grumkow."

"Again I say I fear no man while I have your Majesty's favor," said Henry. "A lie may live for a time, but a man who is brave enough to speak the truth without counting the cost will win for *all* time. When I offend your Majesty by speaking the truth, I shall ask permission to leave Berlin."

"Tut, tut! Don't talk of leaving me," responded the king; "don't fear to speak the truth at all times. If you lie to me, I'll hang you. I may soon have more use for you than

you now suppose. I'm always willing to trust a brave man. Grumkow is a coward; he is brave only when he feels safe. If he were not useful to me, I should not keep him a day. Be careful. He will ruin you with me if he can. But if we put our heads together, we shall thwart him. I tell you, he's a dangerous man."

Henry quite agreed with the king's estimate of Grumkow, and thinking the time opportune for making friends with the powerful minister, said:

"I did not say that Baron Grumkow lied. My words referred to his informants. If your Majesty wishes me to explain to the baron, I shall be glad to do so."

While Henry and the King were talking, Grumkow appeared on a distant part of the parade ground, and the king sent an aide-de-camp to fetch him. When Grumkow came, the king, placing his hand on Henry's shoulder, said:

"This man tells me he had no thought of intimating that you lied. His denunciation was against those who reported falsely to you."

"I beg that you will accept my explanation, offered through his Majesty, and that you will allow me to apologize if my words seemed in any way disrespectful to you," said Henry.

Grumkow muttered something to the effect that the explanation was satisfactory, asked the king's leave to depart, and rode away.

"I'm afraid your apology was wasted," said the king, laughing. "Apologies are useless, as a rule, especially with men of Grumkow's stamp. I tell you, young man, lead and steel are the only antidotes for the poison of a heart filled with hatred."

Again it seemed that Grumkow's favor was tottering, but as the king had said, the unscrupulous minister was always able to right himself.

Up to that time, Henry had believed that in all the world there was no heart more completely filled with the poison of hatred than Frederick William's. But the king's words threw new light on his character, and Henry concluded that his Majesty's great faults were owing less to hatred in the heart than to a touch of madness in the brain. Upon that weakness Grumkow played, and was able to impose his own hatreds on the king. Frederick William, though always violent, seemed rational and sane on all subjects save the Crown Prince and Wilhelmina. His treatment of them was a series of unique cruelties, in matters large and small, which could have proceeded from none but a disordered mind.

One day, while the king and his favorite captain were on a flying visit to Berlin, his Majesty honored Henry with an invitation to dine at the royal table. It was an honor granted to few and dreaded by every one. The dinner hour was noon. In the king's eyes, punctuality was a cardinal virtue, and to be late was to be damned—by his Majesty. Dinner being announced, the king and the queen led the way to the table. When they reached the dining room, Don't Care asked maliciously:

"Where are Fritz and Mina?"

"Yes, where are they?" demanded the king, taking his place, and signifying by a gesture that the others were to be seated. Hardly were the queen, Don't Care and Henry in their chairs when the king began mumbling the long grace that invariably preceded meat—perhaps it would be more exact to say vegetables—at the royal table.

In the midst of grace, the Crown Prince and Wilhelmina entered the dining room and paused till the prayer was ended. When the king said "Amen", they hastened to their places at the table. Henry rose while they were being seated, but the king growled out:

"Keep your chair. A decent man need not

rise to a hussy and a rascal who are always late, late, late."

When the prince and the princess were seated, Henry resumed his chair and viewed the table. The dishes were of massive silver and gold, but there was no table cloth, and the table itself was of cheap wood. Silver and gold could be coined into marks, crowns and pistoles, and in no other palace in Europe was there plate equaling in value that to be found in Berlin and Potsdam. Fine wood, linen and other articles to beautify the palace were not coinable; consequently the king wasted no money on them, but in silver and gold he was both prodigal and miserly. On the table was one large plate of bread, and in front of the king were two massive covers, in which Henry supposed the dinner was stored. His Majesty served all dishes, for the reason that he wished to avoid waste and over-feeding.

After grace, the king ordered a lackey to remove the cover from one of the dishes in front of his plate, and Henry beheld a small lump of boiled pork. From this the king carved a small piece for the queen, another for Don't Care, a large cut for the guest, and a larger one for Majesty. Then the meat dish was covered, a signal that it was to be removed and the con-

tents kept for supper. If an ounce of the pork were lacking when served at the evening meal, Frederick William would detect the theft, create a great storm, and if possible, punish the thief. Fritz and Mina sat holding their hands, while the others at table ate the meat.

When the first course was finished, other plates were brought in, and the second dish, a very large one filled with cabbage, was uncovered. The king, who had been mumbling ever since Fritz and Mina had taken their seats, bountifully helped himself, the queen, Don't Care and Henry to cabbage, and placed a small portion on a plate intended for the Crown Prince. By the time his Majesty had served Wilhelmina's plate, anger had gathered in his brain, and before the lackey could take the plate from the table, irate Majesty seized it, rose to his feet and hurled it, cabbage and all, at the prince's head. Fritz dodged the plate and it fell to the floor. Poor Mina restrained her tears and sat motionless, waiting for the tirade of abuse she knew would come.

"I'll teach you to be late," shouted the king, "you laggard, lazy—lazy—"

But the king's wrath was stemmed by seeing Henry rise, take his own plate of cabbage and place it before the princess. While Henry was

Irate Majesty hurled it, cabbage and all, at the prince's head

resuming his seat, the king scowled angrily, seemed about to explode, changed his mind, laughed, struck the table a blow with his fist and said:

"*Gott!* He isn't afraid of anything—nothing in heaven, earth or hell. Bring another plate." So the dinner proceeded.

It is difficult to believe that such a scene could have taken place at a court where even a meager civilization prevailed, but it was of almost daily occurrence in the household of Frederick William.

The life of the Princess Wilhelmina was so full of unhappiness that it is a pleasure to chronicle even a moment of joy.

After the first visit to Doris Ritter, the prince had promised Henry that another call should be made with Wilhelmina as their companion. The king was pleased when his family paid attention to the citizens of Berlin. He wanted the love of the burghers, and won it by practicing a kindliness shown in no other quarter. Henry had learned this fact, so when Fritz proposed another visit to Ritter's, he suggested:

"There is no need for secrecy in making the

visit. Your father, if notified, will be pleased rather than displeased."

"But I don't want to please him," returned the Crown Prince.

"Be advised," insisted Henry. "Let me ask the king's permission to accompany you and your sister to Ritter's. To be plain, I do not like to go without it. My request will inform his Majesty of your intended visit, and will remove all danger of arousing his ire. I can say to his Majesty that the prince and the princess, desiring to please their father, wish to make the call if it meets with the king's approval."

Wilhelmina, who was present during this conversation, was happy over the prospect of spending a pleasant evening at Ritter's with Henry.

"Please be advised, brother," she exclaimed, delightedly; "we shall enjoy the evening a great deal more if we do not have the dread of the king's wrath always present to rob each moment of a part of its pleasure. I beg you, brother, listen to our friend and let him go to the king."

Fritz consented, and when Henry asked permission of the king to go with the prince and

the princess, his Majesty not only granted it, but was pleased.

"I am glad for you to take them among decent common people," he said. "If I can keep you here and can induce that rascally son of mine to listen to you, you may be able to make something of him."

The Margrave of Schwedt, who passionately loved music, heard of the approaching visit and offered to join the party.

"I love music, and I can sing," he said, pleadingly. Fritz and Mina smiled. The Margrave turned wistfully to the princess, laughed nervously, and explained:

"Yes, yes, I can sing—some. Perhaps you would not like my singing, but I like it and my mother likes it. My mother and I are fond of music, and I should like very much to go with you to Fräulein Ritter's. I have been told she plays beautifully on the harpsichord, and sings beautifully with—with—her—well, of course she sings with her voice. May I have the great pleasure?"

"You are at liberty to come with us," said Wilhelmina.

"I shall be delighted, Margrave," said Henry, "and I am sure the Crown Prince will—"

"Oh, yes, come along if you wish. It will be dull enough, God knows, and you cannot mar it," said the Crown Prince, for whom the lack of secrecy had robbed the adventure of its pleasure.

So it was arranged, and on the appointed evening the Margrave appeared, elegantly dressed—from his standpoint—and comparatively sober.

"You see how greatly I value the privilege of accompanying you," said Adolph, addressing the Crown Prince, the princess and Henry. "I'm almost sober. I drank no more than four quarts of beer this afternoon. Saving you three persons, there is not another on earth, except my mother, for whom I would make the sacrifice."

Just after dark the friends started on foot for Ritter's house. The Crown Prince and Wilhelmina walked in front, and Henry, with the fat Margrave panting by his side, followed at a short distance.

"I want to thank you for past favors," said Adolph, breathing heavily; "and I want to bespeak a new lot."

"I shall be delighted to do you any favor in my power," answered Henry. "I can't recall

having had the privilege of favoring you heretofore."

"But you *have* favored me," gasped Adolph, hanging on to Henry's arm, and trying very hard to keep up with his companions.

A weak heart and the "worst feet in Germany" made walking very arduous work for the Margrave. When he recovered his breath he continued: "You *have* favored me. The beautiful princess says you always speak kindly of me. You have never ridiculed me to her nor to any one; you never try to make me look as if I were a fool. You always treat me kindly, respectfully, considerately, and you are the only person, except the princess and my mother, that does. Other persons seem to think that because I am grotesque in form and face—*mein Gott,* every way—I am a fish or a reptile, having not the feelings and sensations of a human being. The Crown Prince sneers at me, and even since the great service I rendered him at The Tabagie, does not try to conceal his contempt. Every one else follows his example, but that little Don't Care is the worst of all. I hate her—a little."

"She has certainly a great deal of mischief and some malice in her heart," said Henry.

"Yes, she is a little devil," returned Adolph

emphatically. "In truth, my friend, no one knows me as you and my mother do, and that makes me your slave. I love first the beautiful princess; I love next, you, and then, alas, my mother, who should come first, is third. There is nothing I would not do for you, yet I fear I shall never have an opportunity to prove the truth of my words."

But the Margrave was mistaken; a wonderful opportunity came later on.

"What is the favor you want at my hands?" asked Henry, wishing to stem the torrent of Adolph's affections.

"It is this," panted Adolph. "I cannot make my love to the beautiful princess. When I try, I fail of speech, though at other times I am as fluent as a mill sluice, and talk easily and—much. I want to ask you to try, if possible, to do this thing for me. I want you to arrange to have the princess alone with you for a time, and I want you to say to her for me—for me. Please say to her that I love her—I adore her; that all the day is but one dream of her, and that just as long as I am sober I think only of her and see her sweet face in everything of beauty I behold. For me she is the rose, the trees, the soft, green grass; she is the sun with its brightness and its warmth; she is the royal

moon in her queendom of the night; she is the stars sparkling in the firmament, sending their messages on the wings of light from the uttermost confines of space, and from the very heart of the Infinite God. *Ach,* my friend! At times my burden of love is as if the whole earth lay upon my breast. Again, as if on pinions of the seraphim, it wafts me to the steps of the great white throne. I am her knight, I am her slave. Can you remember, or shall I repeat?"

"I'll try, if the opportunity comes," answered Henry.

The Margrave was asking a greater favor than he knew, but Henry promised to convey the message to Wilhelmina, intending to keep his word to the letter, and in the spirit as nearly as possible.

Soon after the visitors arrived, Fritz, with his beloved flute, went with Doris to the harpsichord, and soon was lost in music. The evening was warm, and of course the Margrave suffered intensely from the heat. Presently he left the room through an open window, and after wandering in the garden for a time, returned.

During a lull in the music, he turned to Wilhelmina and Henry, saying:

"There is a beautiful summer-house just by

the window, where we can hear the music and enjoy the cool air. Will you come with me and sit there?"

Ah, the adroit Adolph! Leave him alone to find the way when a lady was to be won by sheer force of intellect.

Wilhelmina hesitated, but when the Margrave insisted, she looked inquiringly at Henry, and seeing approval in his face, rose, saying:

"I believe it will be cooler there than in the house. My brother and Doris don't seem to need us, and we can hear the music through the open window. Let us go."

Accordingly, the three went to the summer-house and listened to the music. After a few minutes the Margrave—the adroit, the knowing Adolph—excused himself, rose and left.

After a long awkward pause, Henry said:

"I suppose I ought to tell you that you are here alone with me because of a deep-laid plot on the part of the Margrave."

"If my being here is the result of a plot, I ought to return to the house at once," answered Wilhelmina, who quite naturally resented any arrangement between Henry and the Margrave relating to her.

"You need not be afraid that I shall forget myself. There is no plot in the sense in which

you fear it, but I believe the Margrave's scheme and his unique request for my services will interest you if you wish to remain and hear of them."

"I'll gladly remain," responded the princess, resuming her seat. "I was startled by what you said, but again I find myself asking forgiveness. That seems to be my chief occupation where you are concerned."

"There is nothing to forgive, and your Highness is too kind to me."

"Please do not speak so formally; we are friends."

Henry hesitated as if trying to check words that were on his lips, but he failed.

"To hear you say that we are friends is sweeter to my ears than—than— But let me tell you about the Margrave's plan."

"Yes, yes, tell me," said Wilhelmina, evidently relieved at the prospect of changing the subject.

"The Margrave asked me to make love to you on his behalf," said Henry.

Wilhelmina laughed nervously, and after two or three false starts, succeeded in saying just what she had intended leaving unsaid:

"The Margrave did not know what he was asking, did he? It certainly is a unique situa-

tion when a man asks another to make love for him to the lady with whom the other man, himself, is—the other man himself is—''

She had not foreseen the end of what she had set out to say, so she stopped suddenly in confusion. Henry did not show that he saw the significance of her unguarded words, but proceeded to do his duty as love's attorney.

''He told me to tell you that for him you were the rose, the trees, the grass. As nearly as I can remember, he said you were also the sun and the stars, bringing to his heart on the wings of light their messages from the confines of infinite space, aye, even from the heart of God. Part of the time the Margrave's love lies on his breast as if it were the whole earth, and again it bears him on the wings of seraphim to the foot of the great white throne. He is your knight—your gentle knight—your slave. I cannot remember all he said, and I feel almost guilty of bad faith in ridiculing him, for he spoke beautifully, tenderly, passionately. There is no doubt that he loves you with a rare, noble passion. The poor, grotesque Margrave is not a fool, and his heart is that of a gentle child. I love him. I would almost give my life if, by doing so, I could bring you to love him. You will soon have to choose between

him and Weissenfels. There is, of course, but one choice—Adolph—and I wish that you could see him with my eyes and could give him your heart."

"You might as well wish that I could fly to the sun, and you had far better wish that I were dead," answered Wilhelmina.

"At times, I almost wish that you could die," returned Henry, "for the unhappiness before you seems more than I can bear. One pang that you will suffer will be a thousand for me, and when I think of it all, I feel that I do not want to live; but unfortunately one cannot have death simply by wishing for it. My love for you has brought me greater pain than I have ever before known. I could endure my own suffering with fortitude if I knew that you were happy, but to love you as I do, with my whole soul, with every drop of blood in my veins, to hold you dearer than life itself, is—"

Henry rose hurriedly, and continued with perceptible effort: "I said I would not again forget myself, but I did. I should have been strong enough to resist—for your sake and for my own. I am not to be trusted and I had better leave you."

He turned to go, but the girl rose, caught his hand, and whispered:

"Don't go. Remain with me just this one minute, and—and—"

Her sentence was never finished. Henry caught her in his arms, and covered her lips, her eyes, her face with kisses. When he released her, she sat down, hiding her face in her hands.

"Do not weep," pleaded Henry, drawing her to him. "Do not weep, but take the joy that has been vouchsafed to us. It is all that we shall ever know. This moment and its memory will help to sweeten the rest of our lives. Do not lose one drop from the precious cup it offers. Drink it, my love, and believe me, in all your life to come, its memory will fill your heart with a gladness that no one can take from you."

"My heart is full of gladness now," answered the girl. "There is room for nothing else. My tears are tears of joy, for I love you and I know that you love me. I have often dreamed of a moment like this—I suppose every girl has—but I never hoped it would come to me. Now I am ready to meet my fate. None but God can rob me of my joy, and I know He would not, for He has sent it to me to give me strength against the misery that is in store for me."

Henry and Wilhelmina drank from their cup

of joy till the music ceased; then they rose, intending to return to the house. As they were leaving the summer-house, Henry clasped the girl in his arms and was kissing her lips, when Adolph, whom they had forgotten, suddenly appeared on the scene.

"*Ach, Gott!*" exclaimed the astonished Margrave, staring aghast at Henry's all too ardent wooing. "I did not tell you to do that! So this is the way you deliver my message! This is the way you keep faith with a friend!"

Henry's surprise completely dammed the current of his thoughts, and for a moment his mind was a blank. Wilhelmina's faculties all came swarming to her rescue.

"Sit by me, Margrave, and I will tell you all," she said, drawing Adolph down beside her. Henry stood, dimly wondering what she was going to do.

"Your friend, who is indeed your friend, has kept faith with you," she said, taking Adolph's hand; "and has complied with your absurd request to the letter. He told me of your love, of which I already knew, and he repeated your beautiful words. Ah, Margrave, there is no one else who can speak so beautifully as you."

It will be seen that Wilhelmina could use art for her purposes when occasion demanded.

"Now I am going to give you the highest possible proof of my confidence and esteem," she continued, turning earnestly to Adolph. "This man loves me and I love him, but our love can be only a source of pain to us, for we are as far from each other as if he were on one side of the world and I on the other."

"*Ach*, yes, it is too bad," sighed the gentle Margrave, forgetting his own pain in the trouble of his friends.

"Yes, it is the greatest misfortune that God can send to us," said Wilhelmina, "but we must endure it, for I can never be his wife. You already know that I shall soon be forced to choose a husband, and that my choice will lie between you and the Duke of Weissenfels. I cannot give you my heart, Margrave; that is beyond my power either to give or to withhold, but when the time comes, I will give you my hand and shall be your wife. Therefore, have pity on me and do not betray my secret."

"Betray your secret!" exclaimed the Margrave, looking at her reproachfully. "You do not know me yet—already. Betray your secret! Your request, my beautiful princess, is almost an insult. I know full well that if you love this man, it is because you cannot help it. You would not deliberately bring it on yourself.

I know he is my friend. If he loves you, it is because he has not the power to withhold his love. There are others—one other, at least—who know that terrible truth by heart—my heart."

"I intended to tell you, if I married you," continued Wilhelmina; "but now you know it all, and when I am your wife, this man will leave me and I shall never see his face again."

The girl covered her face with her hands and began to weep.

"When you are my wife, he shall leave you," said the Margrave, speaking gently, almost dreamily. "Aye, when you are my wife, but—but that shall never be." After a long pause he continued, dropping his words slowly, softly, almost as one might speak in sleep. "I would die before I would bring unhappiness to you. If you were to marry me, loving another, your heart would ache to the day of your death. No, no, my beautiful princess; you do not know me."

"I believe I have not known you," said Wilhelmina, "but I am learning to know you. You are a rare, noble, generous man, a true, brave, gentle knight."

"I hope you are right," sighed the Margrave "I try hard enough to be, but I will prove my truth to you before I have done. I will go to

his Majesty to-morrow, before he offers me your hand, and tell him that I will not accept."

"Then I shall fall to the Duke of Weissenfels," said Wilhelmina, a new vista of trouble suddenly opening before her.

"That is true. What shall we do? *Lieber Himmel!* What a fate for a woman to face—Weissenfels or me! Well, I'm better than Weissenfels, and if the worst comes to the worst, I will accept you, and—I have it!" cried Adolph, joyfully: "your father will order you to choose between Weissenfels and me. You choose me. We will allow the preparations for the marriage to go on, and at the last moment, I will withdraw. I will say: 'No, no, I refuse to marry this woman.' Then let them wonder. A woman may be forced to marry against her will, but I have never known of a man being compelled to take a wife. That's it!"—Adolph was now dancing about in great glee, forgetful of his own troubles—"That's it! You choose me. That will rid you of Weissenfels, and then I'll relieve you of myself, and you—and you may—may remain single."

"Will you do that, Margrave? Will you do that for me?" asked Wilhelmina, deeply touched by Adolph's chivalric offer.

"Indeed, I will do all of that, and if the king

insists on your marriage to Weissenfels—*Gott,* I'll do more—much! You shall marry neither Weissenfels nor me against your will," said the Margrave, lifting his face heavenward, and holding up his right hand. "I, Adolph, by the grace of God Margrave of Schwedt and Knight of Brandenburg, do swear it upon my knightly honor and before my God!"

Presently the three conspirators returned to the house, Mina and Henry each holding an arm of the happy Margrave.

CHAPTER XV

ADOLPH IS VERY SAD

To what extent the Margrave's adroit plan could be carried out, neither Henry nor Wilhelmina could know. They believed that in case of the failure of the Schwedtish marriage, the king would fall back on Weissenfels and force the princess to marry that frightful monstrosity. Marriage with Schwedt or Weissenfels was the keystone of Grumkow's scheme to obtain control of Prussia, and no man whom he could not use would answer his purposes. The king was a puppet in his hands, and would move in the affair of Wilhelmina's marriage just as Grumkow pulled the strings.

Henry had often thought of placing the Ramen letter in the king's hands, but felt sure Grumkow would declare it a forgery, and with the help of Ramen's evidence, would convince Frederick William that it was part of a conspiracy to deprive Prussian Majesty of the baron's valuable services. An instance of the sort had occurred in which Grumkow brazenly faced his own letter in the king's hands, declared it to be a forgery, and succeeded in

sending the informer to the Spandau dungeons for life. To try to use Grumkow's letter would be a dangerous move until there was corroborative evidence so convincing that the king could not refuse to accept it. Henry kept the letter securely, however, hoping to use it to frighten Grumkow and to bring him to terms, rather than to convict him in the king's eyes.

Henry did not see the Margrave for several days after the interesting interview in Ritter's summer-house, and often found himself wondering what his attitude would be. But when the two friends met one afternoon in Henry's room, his mind was at once put to rest by Adolph's cordiality.

"*Ach,* my friend," cried the Margrave, eagerly holding out both hands; "I have not seen you for so long a time that it rests my poor eyes to look upon you."

"I thank you, Margrave. I have been in Potsdam, and am here now only on a flying visit. I have been wondering—"

"Please drop the 'Margrave'. I am Adolph."

"Gladly," returned Henry. "I have been wondering what had become of you, and I—"

"Stop," cried Adolph. "I know what else

you wondered, and I know what you feared, too, my captain. You wondered if I hated you for what happened at Ritter's. Now, the truth, please. Did you not?"

"I did fear I might lose your friendship," answered Henry, "and I should not have blamed you in any way had you felt unkindly toward me. You cannot understand how it was, Margrave."

"Adolph," interrupted the Margrave.

"You cannot understand, Adolph—" ("That's better," said the Margrave) "—understand how it all came about. It was unpremeditated, and happened without the least intention on the part of either the princess or myself. In truth, it happened against our wills."

"I am sure it was not because you willed it," replied the Margrave, laying his hand on Henry's arm. "I can well see how it might happen with you, but, *Gott mein!* How I have to work for those favors, even from a barmaid —yes, work and scheme, and lay deep plots, and then on top of all I have to pay—yes, I have to pay, by the devil! Have to pay for a barmaid's kiss! *Ach,* I told my mother I was a fool to try to win the princess, but I was a greater fool after I came to Berlin to allow the princess's

kindness to set my heart fluttering with hope. You know I told you at the inn about my wits."

"Yes."

"Well, I was mistaken in them. If I ever had any, they deserted me when I came to Berlin. A fool always overrates himself, and—and besides, I don't mind telling you I've been too sober."

"Indeed?" queried Henry, laughing. "I thought you had been well supplied with beer."

"That is true," responded Adolph. "But there was a mistake. My mother, who seems to have gone all wrong, kept saying, 'Drink easy, Adolph, drink easy. Till all is arranged, drink easy.' Well, I drank easy, and *Himmel!* What is the result? You see—a mess. But I love her, even if she did lead me wrong."

Adolph laughed softly, and after a long, meditative pause, continued:

"But I've made up for lost time since I've learned surely that the princess is not for me. I've been drunk three whole days. Three! The king is so stingy that I can't get the kind of beer I need at the palace, so I even went into the city to the Big Sausage Inn—*Zur Groszen Wurst,* we Germans call it—yes, by the devil, I did, and I bought my beer. It is better beer than they give me at the palace. It is good

beer. You would like it. The king won't let his own brewers make good beer; it is too expensive. You don't know the extent of the favor I did you by drinking your beer at The Tabagie that night of the flare-up. The beer at The Tabagie is the vilest stuff that ever went by a good name."

The Margrave, though sober, seemed happy, and Henry was glad to know that his Serene Highness was not grieving for the sake of the princess he had lost. At times when Adolph was silent a veil of sadness spread over his face, and Henry caught himself wondering if the happy manner was assumed. Now and then a sigh would rise to Adolph's lips, deep and long, as if it had come all the way from the bottom of his gentle heart, but the jovial manner soon returned, and Henry's fears that the Margrave was acting a part were allayed. Henry was glad to know that Adolph's heart was not breaking, but was surprised and somewhat amused to learn that his love, seemingly so deep and genuine, had so quickly evaporated.

When Henry congratulated the Margrave on his lucky escape from the pain of unrequited love, the good fellow answered with a laugh, a sigh and a shrug of the shoulders:

"*Ach,* what matters it? The thing that pains

me most is the thought that I have made a fool of myself in the eyes of you and the princess."

"In what respect have you made a fool of yourself in our eyes?" asked Henry.

"First, as I told my mother, I was a fool for imagining that I might win the heart of the princess. That hallucination was partly my mother's fault, though I don't blame her. I would not say, 'She did tempt me'. I am not of the race of Adam. No! My people came from Nod—plain, simple folks who knew no Eden and made no trouble—where Cain got his wife. No, I do not blame her. Her mistake had its birth in a heart of love, and love sanctifies everything. She told me that only a woman could know a woman's heart. *Ach, der Teufel!* The poor old woman meant well, but she doesn't know a woman's heart from a pig's foot. I am beginning to believe that no woman knows another woman's heart. Each woman's heart is a new secret in the universe, and remains hidden till the seal is broken by one man. Then, in many cases, I believe it closes itself against all the rest of the world for all time, though to him it may remain an open book. My first mistake was made because I did not know all these big, little facts. Against my judgment, I believed my mother."

"Many a man has fallen into the same errors," suggested Henry.

"Yes, yes," returned Adolph, "and each man, I suppose, thinks he suffers alone. My second mistake was made in trusting a man who I knew was in love with the woman I loved. That was a grave error. But I fell into it because I was too sober. I had no right to expect fidelity in such a case."

"Did you know that I loved the princess?" asked Henry.

"Yes," replied the Margrave. "I knew that you could not help it. No man can who once sees and feels the sweetness of her smile. But I thought you were of low degree—I don't understand how I made that mistake, either, and—and—well, as I have said, I was a fool and that tells it all." He sat blinking, thinking and whistling softly for a moment, then turned quickly on Henry and spoke almost sharply. "I should not have trusted you. It was a greater test of friendship than I had any right to make."

"But your doing so lost you nothing," suggested Henry.

"Because I had nothing to lose," returned the Margrave.

After a long silence, Henry asked: "Why do

you say you made a mistake in supposing me to be of low degree?"

"Why? Because, being a fairly good judge of human nature, I needed only to open my eyes to learn the truth."

"What is the truth, Margrave?"

"How can I tell?" asked Adolph, shrugging his shoulders. "I am not a wizard. I know what you are, but who you are I cannot know unless you wish to tell me. The puzzling fact is that you were kidnaped. It is hard for me to understand how one of your rank fell into the recruiter's net, and why, being netted, you did not flounce out. But nothing that this mad king does should cause me to wonder. If King George of England were six feet tall, by the devil, I believe our king would have him in his regiment. I'm expecting, one of these fine days, to walk down the parade line and find August of Saxony or Henry of Bayreuth in the ranks. It is said they are both over six feet."

Another long silence ensued, and Henry said, musingly: "I have half a mind to trust you with my secret—to tell you who I am."

"A man should not trust another when both are in love with the same woman," suggested the Margrave, laughing and shrugging his shoulders. "That, you know, is a lesson I have

just learned. One naturally longs to impart fresh knowledge. That is why the hen cackles when the astonishing, always new fact that she has laid an egg dawns on her intellect."

"But you, Margrave, are not as other men are, and I am going to make amends for the fault I could not help by making you my confidant, by trusting you to an extent that I would trust no man save my father. I am the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth."

"*Ach, Gott!*" exclaimed Adolph, blinking for a moment, then going to the window.

After standing at the window two or three minutes, he came back, stopped in front of Henry and began to laugh.

"So my jest about August of Saxony may after all come to be a fact. Your rank is equal to that of the King of Poland, though your father's estate is smaller. But why did you come and why do you remain? *Ach,* I know. The princess. Of course! Of course! Yes!"

"She was not the cause. There were grave reasons why I left home and became an unknown soldier, but the princess was no part of them, and I would not have you tell her who I am."

"I'll guard your secret," said Adolph. "It seems almost a marvel that one who talks as

much as I do should be able to keep a secret, but to me the confidence of a friend is a sacred thing."

"I believe you and I believe in you, Margrave. Read this letter. In showing it to you, I give you the highest proof of my faith in your discretion and honor."

Henry brought out Grumkow's letter, and the Margrave read it without speaking. After the third reading, he exclaimed:

"*Ach, Gott!* This is horrible; and I was ready to be their tool. I thank you! I thank you! You should carry this letter to the king forthwith."

"And go forthwith to Spandau's dungeons, or fall by an assassin's knife?" interrupted Henry.

"Why?" asked Adolph.

"Because," said Henry, "Grumkow would say the letter was a forgery. He would swear that he had never seen it before. Ramen would swear that she had never seen it. When it came to the test, Don't Care would swear that she had not given it to me; and the king would believe them all."

"You are right," returned the Margrave.

"Yes, I am right, Margrave, and now you are to learn that there is at least one man

besides yourself who can at times act from unselfish motives. Deeply as I regret it, nevertheless it is true that the princess can never be my wife. You are not handsome to look upon, but in many respects your heart is the kindest, gentlest and noblest I have ever known. You must marry this beautiful princess. It is hard for me to give you this advice, but I have thought the situation over carefully, and there is no other course to pursue. You must marry her to save her from a worse fate."

"*Ach!* Never! Never!" moaned Adolph.

"But you, too, must think, and you must take my advice," insisted Henry, grasping the Margrave's arm. "You and I, who love this girl, must lose sight of ourselves and think only of her. The king will force her to marry you or Weissenfels. You already know Grumkow's purpose in desiring one or the other marriage. If by any chance his plan ripens, and you become King of Prussia, you will not be his tool; you will be his Nemesis."

"Or he will be my Brutus," suggested the Margrave, blinking rapidly.

"But you must not think of yourself. If you are to find your Brutus, let him come when he will. The princess only is to be considered, and you must not forget that if she does not

become your wife, she will fall to the lot of Weissenfels."

The Margrave rose from his chair, straightened himself to his greatest height, thrust his hand in the breast of his coat, threw back his head, and answered:

"You forget that I have made an oath—an oath that the princess shall never marry Weissenfels. That oath settles the question."

"No, it does not," returned Henry. "There is but one way to settle it. You must marry the princess. Go to her now and ask her opinion."

Adolph's face lighted joyfully as he said:

"I'll go at once."

All of this strange advice jumped with Adolph's burning desire, making it easy for him to convince himself that there was but one way to serve the princess; so he went to seek her, feeling almost happy once more.

It is needless to try to describe Henry's state of mind when the Margrave left him. Adolph's example had been a good one, and the rare flower of unselfishness had bloomed in Henry's heart as a blossom opens in the sun. His unselfish advice was all the more commendable in view of his suffering. There were, however, two considerations that softened his pain. He

had learned to know the Margrave and to love him. He knew also that while Wilhelmina respected Adolph and loved his gentleness, there was no passionate longing for him in her heart and never could be. Jealousy, therefore, was not among Henry's sources of pain. In truth, he was so harassed by his passionate love and sense of loss on the one hand, and by his fear of Weissenfels and an unselfish longing for Mina's happiness on the other, that he was not in a state of mind to reach any satisfying conclusion.

The moment the Margrave was gone, Henry regretted having sent him. He also regretted having told him that he was the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth. In showing Grumkow's letter, he feared he had made another mistake. In short, it seemed, as in the case of the Margrave, that love had robbed him of his judgment, and that he had been falling from one mistake into another as rapidly as possible under the circumstances.

Henry sat at the window looking down on the garden. After a short time, he saw Wilhelmina walking alone down one of the paths. Presently the Margrave, puffing, blowing and mopping his face, appeared on the scene, following the princess as rapidly as his fat legs

and heavy feet could carry him. Henry knew that Adolph had gone a-wooing, and pitied the simple-hearted fellow. He more than pitied him; he loved him and wished him success.

In a few minutes the Margrave came up the path alone, returning from his wooing. His step was heavy; the red handkerchief hung limp in his hand and dragged on the ground regardless of a deluge of perspiration calling loudly to be mopped. From head to foot Adolph showed dejection, hopelessness, misery. He sought Henry immediately.

"*Ach,* I knew! I knew!" wailed the Margrave, seating himself beside Henry near the window. "I am a fool—always a fool when that girl is considered. I grasp at straws; I fly at phantasms; I run wildly after mere shadows, hallucinations, dreams. *Ach,* friend, pity me."

Unable to suppress his pent-up emotion, he fell forward with his face on his folded arms, resting on the window shelf, and gave way to a flood of tears.

"Was ever man so unfortunate as I?" he moaned. "I, who love this perfect woman as woman was never loved before, must refuse her

whom I would give my life to possess, though I may have her for the taking."

"You are to be pitied," said Henry, sympathetically, "but I, too, have only the sense of doing right to soften my pain. I, who love the princess and who have her love, must see her go to the arms of another man. That, my friend, is the essence of bitterness."

"True, true," said the Margrave, lifting his head and drying his eyes. "I should be giving sympathy, not seeking it. What do you suppose she said?"

"I can hardly imagine," answered Henry, for the lack of anything else to say.

"She said—*ach,* it is terrible to think upon —she said she would marry me if her father forced her to choose between me and Weissenfels, but she wept and said she would not be alive one month after the marriage ceremony. Now can I, being a man, marry her? I ask you, can I marry her?"

"It would almost seem that you cannot," replied Henry.

"No," said Adolph; "our first plan is better. Let the princess choose me, and at the last moment I shall refuse to marry her. After that, I'll take care of Weissenfels. Leave him to me—to me. I have said—much."

CHAPTER XVI

WILHELMINA CONSENTS

Within a fortnight after the conversation between Adolph and Fritz Henry, the king sent the long-delayed message to England with formal notice that all negotiations of marriage in that quarter were broken off. The queen, whose whole married life had been devoted to bringing about the English marriage, was heart-broken, and there was many a stormy scene between her and her husband. The queen's wrath also fell on Wilhelmina's head because she had not insisted on a continuation of the marriage negotiations with England. The princess was helpless. Her wishes or protests would have been a waste of breath, but the queen was angry at every one, and Mina, having been her scapegoat ever since the day she was born a girl instead of a boy, felt the sharp edge of her mother's ill temper.

"Now, you will have the pleasure of marrying one of two beasts, Schwedt or Weissenfels," said Queen Sophia, upbraiding Wilhelmina because of a state of affairs

for which the princess was in no way responsible. "Schwedt or Weissenfels, and I am glad of it—glad of it. It is what you deserve for being a poor, spiritless, mean-hearted fool. Your sister Don't Care would have shown her teeth, and would have used them, too, had she been in your place. See what she did when your father and Grumkow suggested marrying her to the lean, lank, poverty-stricken Prince of Bayreuth. She gave your father to understand that she would have no pauper skeleton for a husband."

"Indeed I did," said Don't Care, who was standing near by, laughing at her sister's distress. "I defied Stumpy to his face, and harassed him until he was only too glad to let the matter drop."

"I wish I could follow your example," said the weeping Wilhelmina, "but I am helpless, and I have grown to care very little what my fate may be."

"That is where the trouble lies," screamed the queen; "you're so meek, so weak, so limp and listless that your father and Grumkow drive you hither and thither as a sheep dog drives the sheep. I'm tired of quarreling and storming for your sake. I'm going to stop, and you can go to the devil or any place you

choose whenever you wish. If you won't lift a hand to save yourself, I'll stop fighting for you."

"But what shall I do? Tell me, mother, what shall I do?" pleaded Mina.

"Tell your father that you will marry neither Schwedt nor Weissenfels," returned the queen, impressively. "Tell him that he may kill you, but that you will neither choose nor have either of these men. He has not yet ordered you to make choice, but the command will come within a few days. When it comes, defy the king, and he will have to yield to your will. Then he will reinstate the English negotiations."

Although Mina dreaded marriage with the English prince quite as much as with Weissenfels or Schwedt, she hoped that the queen was right, for the English negotiations were sure to drag, and their re-opening would at least give her time. She therefore determined to take the queen's advice, and to make a brave stand against the terrible king and the still more terrible Grumkow.

It came to pass as the queen had prophesied; at least, it came to pass in part, for within a fortnight the order came to Wilhelmina that she should choose as her husband either

Johann Adolph, Margrave of Schwedt, or the Duke of Weissenfels.

During the period intervening between Wilhelmina's conversation with the queen and the day of the king's final order, events happened that made it easy for his Majesty and Grumkow to force their will upon the princess.

The Crown Prince, having determined to try to escape from the clutches of his father, told Wilhelmina of his plans. When she endeavored to dissuade him, as on a former occasion, he accused her of selfishness and closed the argument by telling her angrily that his going was no affair of hers, and that she need not meddle in what concerned him only.

The prince, like every other selfish person, failed to appreciate the fact that his acts might seriously affect all who were near him; yet of all persons, he was the most prone to bring trouble to others. In this instance, what he did brought many of his friends into frightful trouble, and helped to make it impossible for his sister to disobey the commands of Grumkow and the king.

The prince tried to escape, but was captured. His friends, Keith and Katt, were with him. Keith succeeded in making his way safely out of Brandenburg; Katt was taken with the prince.

Both were charged with desertion. The prince was confined in his room, a prisoner, awaiting trial for treason. Katt was sent to Spandau.

The prince's escapade is no part of this history save in its bearing on Wilhelmina, and the scenes attending it were so horrible that they will be referred to as briefly as possible.

Grumkow communicated the king's commands to Wilhelmina one evening in the queen's parlor. The baron intimated to Wilhelmina that he desired a few words privately with her, and she followed him to a distant part of the room.

"His gracious Majesty, your affectionate father," began Grumkow ominously, "wishing to see you well settled and happy for life, directs me to say to you that he has selected two worthy men of high rank, the Margrave of Schwedt and the Duke of Weissenfels, and that you may make your choice of a husband between them. Loving you tenderly, he is anxious that you shall be consulted in a matter that touches you so nearly; therefore, he graciously leaves the choice to you. He expects an answer within a few days—at once, if possible."

Poor Wilhelmina, bearing in mind her mother's command, said: "I choose neither of these gentlemen for my husband. You may

say to the king that I absolutely refuse, and that there is no possible way in which he can compel me to marry either the Margrave of Schwedt or the Duke of Weissenfels."

Grumkow remained silent for a moment, then responded, smilingly:

"To return such an answer to your loving father would be not only ungrateful, but would be disobedience to your parent, and you know the Scriptures speak most emphatically against that sin."

"It is true," answered Wilhelmina. "The Scriptures command us to obey our parents, but in my case it is impossible. I have two parents, a father and a mother. My father commands me to marry one of these men. My mother commands me to marry neither. Which one of my parents shall I obey? Remember, Baron Grumkow, the Scriptures say, 'Honor thy father and thy mother'."

"Your argument is strong and most ingenious, my dear princess," answered the smiling Grumkow, "but the Scriptures also say, 'Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands'. If your mother disobeys your father's commands, she is guilty of a grievous sin, and if you obey her, you partake of her guilt."

Wilhelmina was lost for a moment, but soon

retorted: "Father has put no command upon the queen, and as long as she is not disobeying him, I cannot keep the scriptural injunction to obey my parents when their commands conflict."

Grumkow laughed, showing his teeth as when a dog snarls: "Your Highness is a rare logician, and for the present, you are right. But we will see that the queen receives her command, and I advise you to make your choice, or the king will make it for you. Yes; he will save you from the sin of disobeying scriptural injunction by giving his commands to the queen at once."

"In that case I shall disobey both the Scriptures and my father," answered the princess.

"There will be many ways of inducing you to obey both," said Grumkow, again showing his teeth, and walking away with a true, satanic smile on his lips.

When Grumkow left, Wilhelmina was summoned to the queen's side and closely questioned concerning the conversation. She told her mother all that was said, and for once Queen Sophia approved her daughter's conduct, and spoke kindly to her.

Within an hour Grumkow reappeared and addressed the queen:

"The king commands me to say to your Majesty that your stubborn disobedience pains him grievously. That your Majesty should so far forget your duty to your husband, your king and your God as openly to defy the king's commands is a matter of wonder and grief to his Majesty. Although he is loath to compel obedience by force, he feels that it is his duty to say to your Majesty that if the Princess Wilhelmina remains obdurate and does not, within three days after to-morrow noon, make choice of a husband as already indicated, his Majesty will choose for her. If she still refuses to marry the man of his choice, she shall be locked up in Spandau Castle with the Duke of Weissenfels, and when she comes out she will be glad enough to marry any man who will have her."

The queen was almost prostrated, and could answer only:

"Tell the king he will cause my death if he carries out his threat."

"Tell the king for me," said Wilhelmina, speaking softly but firmly, "that he may carry out his threat, but that I will not choose either of these men for my husband, nor will I marry either of them if he makes the choice for me."

"Within three days you will be glad enough

to choose. You and the queen will be on your knees to his Majesty, begging the privilege to obey," answered Grumkow, bowing, smiling and withdrawing.

The events of the next two days were too horrible to be given save in briefest outline.

Doris Ritter, than whom there was no purer, truer maiden, was dragged naked at a cart's tail through the streets of Berlin, and unmercifully flogged, for no other reason than that she was a friend of the Crown Prince and Wilhelmina. Katt was beheaded in front of the Crown Prince's window, and Fritz was forced to witness the execution.

Henry was on duty at Spandau during all this period, and knew nothing of Grumkow's horrible deeds. Wilhelmina and the queen knew of them, and were in despair. They tried to see the king, to beg him to spare Katt's life, but Grumkow was careful to prevent their meeting with his Majesty.

After Katt's death, Grumkow appeared before the queen and Wilhelmina. The two poor women were almost prostrated and could not even protest. Grumkow lost no time in ceremony, but spoke briefly and to the point:

"His Majesty commands me to say that the friends of the princess, beginning with Mlle.

Sonnsfeld, will be served as Doris Ritter was treated, and that the court martial now sitting in judgment on the Crown Prince will inflict on his Royal Highness the fate suffered by Katt unless the Princess Wilhelmina, before to-morrow night, makes choice of a husband as directed by her kind and gracious father. Furthermore, if the choice is not made, the king will, after to-morrow night, command the princess to marry the Duke of Weissenfels, and if the punishment inflicted on her brother and her friends does not subdue her stubborn will, she shall go to Spandau with his Grace, the duke, as I have already intimated."

"I will marry the Margrave of Schwedt!" cried Wilhelmina. Then Grumkow smiled, bowed and took his leave.

The same evening the Margrave approached the princess in the queen's parlor, to thank her publicly for having chosen him. He bowed low, took her proffered hand, and lifted it to his lips.

"I thank your Highness for the honor you have done me. My life shall be devoted to your happiness."

Don't Care, who was standing near by, shrugged her shoulders, laughed under her breath, and whispered to her neighbor, Ramen:

"I am sure that ought to make Mina happy. She will at least not lack for fat meat."

The Margrave and Mina distinctly heard Don't Care's remark, and it spurred Mina to speak, though she was almost dumb with grief.

"I thank you, Margrave, and I feel sure you will be kinder to me than others who should love me, but who seem to take joy from my sorrow."

"Do not treat me kindly," whispered the Margrave, when he found himself alone with the princess. "Grumkow is watching and will suspect there is a plan to thwart his purpose if he finds you less unhappy than you should be. Turn your back and appear to disdain me."

The princess hesitated to humiliate the Margrave.

"I should dislike to ill treat you before the court," she said.

"*Ach,* don't consider me," he answered, smiling. "The whole court knows why you chose me, and every one despises me for being a party to the crime. Let them think what they will; I care not. They will soon change their minds."

He bowed and withdrew. As he turned, he collided with the long Duke of Weissenfels, who said:

"Out of my way, you twice fat hog!"

All who were near saw the duke's scowl, and many persons heard his words.

"*Ach*, it hurts him," cried Adolph, laughing triumphantly and shrugging his shoulders. "He did not receive the golden apple. There may be another Trojan War."

The Margrave's words were heard by every one in the room, including the duke, and although Adolph spoke jestingly, he was terribly in earnest. For some time there had been enmity between the two, and the Margrave hoped to widen the breach. He succeeded so well that the duke, who was proud of his reputation as a duelist, was heard on several occasions to threaten "the fat fellow" with extinction in several horrible forms, the least frightful of which was running his sword through the Margrave's heart. The duke's threats all reached the Margrave's ears, but they did not frighten him. On the other hand, they filled his heart with joy, and he was careful that they should be made known to the king.

The next evening at The Tabagie, after the king had risen and while the Margrave's nerves were fortified by a large amount of beer, the duke, who could not at all compete with Adolph in the matter of beer drinking, however superior

he may have been as a duelist, took occasion to annoy the Margrave in many petty ways. The adroit Adolph offered Weissenfels every opportunity to show his ill temper, and after his Grace had exhibited his bad feeling in such a manner that the king could not help seeing it, the Margrave approached his Majesty, who graciously lent his ear to his future son-in-law.

"Your Majesty may have noticed," said Adolph, with great earnestness, "that his Grace of Weissenfels is taking every occasion to put insufferable insult upon me."

"Yes, I have noticed that his looks are sour, and that he seems to take delight in trying to insult you," answered the king, laughing and waving his hand to indicate that it was of no consequence.

"My immediate business with your Majesty is this," said the Margrave, standing at his tallest and swelling prodigiously in the breast. "I wish to ask your Majesty's permission to slap the duke's face—face, your Majesty—and when he attempts to run from me, it is my intention, always with your Majesty's permission, to kick him."

As already intimated, Adolph had been drinking.

"You have my permission to do both," said

the king, laughing and resting his hand kindly on the Margrave's shoulder. "But he may not run. He has threatened to run you through, and you know he is a very devil with a sword."

The Margrave's intentions had been good, and his determination had been real, but they had been formed hastily and without due consideration. The king's suggestion that the duke might not run away, but that he might draw his sword, sicklied o'er the native hue of Adolph's resolution with the pale cast of thought. Following the pale cast of thought came a wish that Henry were present to aid and abet him in his undertaking, and to see him in a valiant rôle. After the wish had taken form, prudence whispered to the Margrave that it would be wise to postpone chastising the duke till Henry was present for the twofold purpose of giving help should it be needed, and of glorying in Adolph's triumph when achieved. Therefore, he did not go directly to Weissenfels, but waited for the duke to continue his insulting conduct.

After Weissenfels had left, Adolph sought the king to tell him that the enemy, doubtless having heard of his danger, had fled.

The king laughed and said: "Your opportunity will come again, Margrave, and when it

does, I hope you will not fail to improve it. But beware of the duke; he is a bad, vicious man, a good swordsman, and in case of an encounter, will kill you if he can."

The king's words saved the Margrave a deal of trouble later on, for Adolph was not a coward, as you will agree if you follow this history to its end.

Next morning the Margrave drove to Spandau Castle. Henry had been there for nearly a month, drilling new recruits, preparatory to trouble with Hannover, which the king was expecting because of a dispute with his brother-in-law over a few loads of hay.

Adolph hastened to Fritz Henry's room, and fell weeping on his friend's neck.

"*Ach, Gott!*" moaned the Margrave. "Berlin is but another hell, and Grumkow is the archfiend. Have you heard?"

"I have heard nothing for nearly a month," answered Henry. "The king permits no news to travel from Berlin to Spandau. He says it disturbs his soldiers. I have heard it whispered among the officers that the Crown Prince tried to run away, and that his plans were discovered and defeated by Grumkow and the king. But it has been only a whispered rumor

in Spandau, and the whispering has been in very low tones, you may be sure."

"*Ach, lieber Himmel!*" wailed the Margrave, pacing the floor excitedly, but trying hard to speak calmly: "You have not heard that Doris Ritter was whipped at the cart's tail—whipped naked through the streets of Berlin?"

Henry, who had been sitting in the deep embrasure of the window, sprang to his feet, exclaiming:

"Margrave, you are insane! You are mad! Why should any one wish to whip that pure, inoffensive girl? It is impossible! You must be wrong!"

"It is true," sighed the Margrave, "but that is not the worst. Katt was beheaded before the window of the Crown Prince, who was forced to witness the execution. Grumkow told the queen and the princess that the fate of Doris Ritter would fall on Mlle. Sonnsfeld and on all of Wilhelmina's friends, and that Katt's fate would be meted out to the Crown Prince, if the princess did not at once choose Weissenfels or me; so she chose me. Our public betrothal will take place the day after to-morrow. *Ach, Gott,* I pity her! From the bottom of my heart, I pity her. My life is nothing to me if by casting it away I can save her. The man

who cares nothing for his life is to be feared, for he is thrice strong. I may be able to help her."

"I pray God you may be!" cried Henry, hardly capable, as yet, of grasping the terrible situation.

"Grumkow also said that in case these calamities failed to bring the princess to a sense of her duty, the kind and gracious father would send her here with Weissenfels, and would leave her till she would be glad to marry any man."

"The king and Grumkow are not men; they are fiends!" cried Henry. "But tell me of the Crown Prince. Is he free?"

"No, he is imprisoned in his rooms, and is kept on bread and water. The court martial suspended the sentence of death, awaiting the action of Wilhelmina. If I did not feel that I am her only hope, I should kill myself—I should kill myself—aye, now, this minute—at once. I never before knew that in all the world there was so much evil as is contained in the heart of this one man, Grumkow. Surely God has permitted the devil to become incarnate."

"But how can you help her?" asked Henry. "It looks as if God only can do that now unless you marry her."

"How generous and noble you are," said the Margrave, kissing Henry's cheek before he could draw away. "It is no wonder she loves you. The man who loves a woman, and for the sake of her happiness wishes her to marry another, surely is unselfish almost beyond the limits of the human heart."

"You are that, Margrave," said Henry. "But tell me how you can help her."

"I do not know, but I want you to come to the betrothal ceremony day after to-morrow, at two o'clock. It will take place in the Mirrored Chamber. Then perhaps you will see how I shall help the princess—perhaps. I do not know myself; I do not know my strength; I do not know my courage. I am brave when I talk about danger, but *ach!* I fear I am a coward when I meet it. Meantime, I want you to give me a copy of Grumkow's letter to Ramen."

"Again I insist that Grumkow would pronounce the letter a forgery, even if you should show the original to the king. But the copy—he would laugh at it."

"I'm not so great a fool as to show the original to any one. That must remain hidden where no one but you can find it. I shall have use only for the copy, and I will not show it to the king unless I must."

"You shall have the copy as soon as we reach Berlin," said Henry. "I have the letter with me, but I have neither pen nor paper, and if I had both, we ought not to try to copy it here. I will at once obtain permission to go to Berlin."

Henry asked leave of absence, and found an order from the king directing him to return to Berlin for the purpose of attending the betrothal ceremony, and to assist in reviewing the regiment in honor of the occasion.

On reaching Berlin, Henry asked permission of the king to visit the Crown Prince, who was confined in his apartments in the attic of the palace. The king seemed glad to see his new favorite, and answered:

"Yes, yes, for the love of God! Give the rascal a little of your brains, for he is the most perverse fool unhung."

Henry hastened to the Crown Prince's garret prison, having received from the king the word that would enable him to pass the guard.

"Ah, my friend," cried the prince. "You deserted us in our time of trouble. Where have you been?"

"I've been at Spandau, and heard only yesterday evening of your troubles. Poor Katt! I once heard him prophesy that he would be

hanged or beheaded. I'm glad Keith escaped."

"I, too, am glad, but I wish I could have taken Katt's place," returned the prince, drearily. "If ever a man was tired of life, I am."

"You have your sister, your people and your friends to care for, and you must live to be king. Then you can make up to them what they have suffered for your sake. I should suppose that no small part of the satisfaction you would take in royal power would be to retaliate on those who have used you and your friends so cruelly."

"I fear that by the time I am king I shall have grown to be like my father, and if that comes to pass, I shall turn against the friends who have helped me, and shall fawn upon the enemies who would ruin me. What a frightful curse it is when a man must stare the sins of his father in the face and know that they will some day be his own; that he will inherit them along with his father's nose and scowl, his bad heart and his crown. The passage of Scripture which says the iniquity of the father is visited on the children should read: 'The sins of the father are vested in the son when the son becomes old enough to inherit them.' A man may try to escape them, but the oak will be like the tree from which its acorn fell. For the

sake of my friends and my people, but above all, for my own sake, I wish I could have taken Katt's place."

The little prince had the rarest of all wisdom, knowledge of self. His foresight proved true, for Frederick the Great was but a sane copy of his father, modified by Voltaire and cynicism.

"Katt's death should teach your Highness a great lesson," said Henry.

"It has taught me—much, as Adolph would say," answered little Fritz. "It has taught me that my father can be won and influenced only by the use of the most barefaced treachery, lying and fraud. If one defies him, yet seems to flatter his whims, he may be made useful. Grumkow does it; why shall not I? I shall become a canting, pious charlatan. I shall seek to deceive my father in every way in my power. I shall be false to him; I shall lie to him. Then I may defy him and he will respect me."

"All that you say is true and possible," answered Henry.

"Yes," responded the little prince. "I thought it all out last night. From this day forth, I'll be a canting hypocrite, a knave, and

I shall soon become very dear to the heart of my father."

After an hour spent with the prince, Henry left, and on his way down the attic gallery, had the wonderful good fortune to meet Wilhelmina.

"Come with me," she whispered eagerly, as she caught him by the hand and led him to an alcove in a gable window.

The scene between them on the windowseat need not be given, except that part which relates to the remarkable proposition made by Henry.

"If we could escape," said he, "we might hide ourselves away from all the world and be happy."

Much to Henry's surprise the princess replied: "I will go with you any day, any hour. I will trust you even in so desperate a venture. You know best. If you believe we can hide ourselves away from the world, I am willing to accept your judgment and will go with you. If we are caught, the king can but kill us."

Mina's words brought great joy to Henry's heart. For a moment his longing warped his judgment, and he began to suggest plans of escape. A little consideration, however, soon convinced him that he and the princess could not by any possible chance reach the boundary

lines of Brandenburg, and that an attempt to run away with her would soon bring disaster on her, his father and himself.

Henry did not explain to Wilhelmina the difficulties and dangers as they presented themselves to him, but wishing that she might snatch a moment's happiness from the midst of wretchedness, allowed her to hope and dream. Twice he was on the point of telling her that he was the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, but he feared to raise false hopes in her heart, and refrained because he knew that as the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, he stood no better chance of winning her for his wife than he did as a captain of Prussian Grenadiers. The impulse to tell her was fleeting, for he had almost forgotten that he was really the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, and his identity was almost lost in the captain of Grenadiers. His father, too, seemed dim to him.

It is true that, at this time, Henry had been in Berlin less than six months, but a month is as long as the events it contains, and the months Henry had spent at the Prussian court had been full to overflowing. First, of course, came the great event—his love for Wilhelmina. That in turn was followed by the still greater and far more startling discovery that she loved him.

Then came the frightful realization that he had won and lost the only thing in life that was really worth having—the woman he loved, that loved him.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BETROTHAL CEREMONY

The really brave man is one who, clearly seeing a danger, can "screw his courage to the sticking-place" and face it. One who carefully considers all risks and determines to take them regardless of consequences is one of whom it is well to beware. Of such quality was the Margrave's courage—when he had any at all.

Adolph had promised Henry and the princess that he would refuse Wilhelmina's hand and would see to it that she was not troubled by Weissenfels. How he intended to approach the stormy king with his refusal, neither Henry nor Mina could conjecture. They doubted his courage to carry the project through, and feared that in the end he would quail before Grumkow, bow to irate Prussian Majesty, and notwithstanding a host of good intentions, would succumb at the last moment to violence and threats. His mother, too, they feared, would stand by the king, and urge and berate her son beyond the point of endurance. They knew that he had always been putty in her vigorous hands. They also knew that her

heart was set on the marriage, and that she had brought Adolph to Berlin at Grumkow's request, for that and for no other purpose. But their greatest fear was of Weissenfels, in case the Margrave really developed the courage and strength necessary to refuse Wilhelmina's hand, and to beat down the onslaught of her father and his mother.

If the Margrave refused, there seemed no way to avoid the worst of all calamities—marriage with Weissenfels—and how the gentle Adolph hoped to avert that evil was a mystery neither Henry nor Wilhelmina could solve. They had so little faith in his ability to carry out the latter half of his promise that they had never even asked him to explain his plan, and as the day of betrothal approached, they began to fear rather than to desire Adolph's defiance of the king. The Margrave was so infinitely the less of two evils that Mina and Henry had almost concluded to cling to the ills they had rather than fly to those of which they already knew too much.

For several days before the time set for the betrothal ceremony, the Margrave had tried repeatedly to speak his mind to the king, but had not succeeded. Thrice he had endeavored

to fortify his soul with beer, but each effort had failed. Either he did not take enough to give him courage, or he took so much that he went to sleep and did not waken until he again needed fortifying.

The Margravine of Schwedt, suspecting her son's intentions, spoke to him on the subject.

"I hope, Adolph, you will not be so great a fool as to refuse the happiness and the good fortune the king offers you."

"*Ach, Gott,* mother!" answered the Margrave, burying his face in his hands. "A man who will accept a woman against her will deserves to spend an eternity in hell."

"But the princess seems willing, though I admit she's not enthusiastic," suggested the Margravine.

"Not entirely," interrupted Adolph.

"But if you refuse her, she will suffer a worse fate—Weissenfels. If you are so great a fool as to refuse the hand of the princess, I'll disown you."

"If Weissenfels were out of the question, and you advised me to accept the princess's hand, I should disown you and find another mother. Yes, by the devil, that's what I'd do. Now, mother, listen to me. I have for many years listened to you, and, to please you,

have at times taken your advice when I knew you were wrong. Now, hear what I have to say. I love you beyond all persons save one in the world, but *I* am Johann Adolph, Margrave of Schwedt. My state is my state; my people are my people; I am myself; you are of the past and your day is done. In this matter I shall take the course I believe to be right, whatever that may turn out to be, and if you throw one straw in my way,—well, as I said, you may look for another son, and I shall try to find another mother, or do without one altogether."

"You surprise and shock me," said the Margravine, timidly, recognizing that Adolph had come to his strength.

"I so intended," replied Adolph, "and although I would not cause you one moment of pain if I could avoid it, I wish to impress on your mind the fact that I do not want your advice in this affair, and that if you would keep my love, you will not interfere unless I ask you to help me in carrying out my purposes, whatever they may prove to be."

Thereupon the Margrave walked out of the room, a braver, taller, stronger man than he had ever been in all his life before.

There is a leavening quality in courage that seems, like yeast, to propagate itself. A little

leaven had come to Adolph through his defiance of his mother, of whom he had always stood in great fear; would it leaven the whole loaf?

The betrothal ceremony was to take place in the afternoon. On the morning of the eventful day, the great questions to be solved by the Margrave were, first: what dress he should wear, and second: should he get himself drunk. The first question was settled after a long consultation with Henry and the Margravine. She was very joyful in the belief that as matters had progressed thus far, they would continue happily to the end.

The serious consideration by the Margrave of the question of dress seemed to indicate that he intended abandoning his resolution to refuse Wilhelmina's hand, and had determined to allow events to take their course, as decreed by fate, and as outlined by Grumkow and the king. At least, it showed conclusively that, up to that time, he had failed to summon the courage to confront the king's ire.

The second question, that of getting himself drunk, on the other hand, seemed to indicate that he wished to fortify his soul for an attack on Majesty at the last moment. Henry had begun to hope that the Margrave's courage would fail him, for immediately back of

his refusal to marry the princess stood the horrible specter, Weissenfels.

The mother advised beer, that beverage being, in her opinion, a sovereign cure for every ill. Although the time was full of trouble and grief for Henry, the serious, almost prayerful consideration of these two questions by the Margrave and the Margravine was so ludicrous that he could not help feeling the humor of the situation. When the Margravine advised beer, Adolph turned an inquiring face toward Henry, as if to ask: "What do you say, drunk or sober?"

Henry answered the mute appeal: "If you drink too much beer, Margrave, you will go to sleep. If you don't drink enough, it will do you no good."

"*Ach,* the captain is right," cried the excited Margravine. Turning to Henry, she continued, as if the Margrave were not present: "If the beer does not make him drunk, it makes him look silly. When he is drunk and asleep, captain, he is beautiful. His face is as calm and as sweet as a child's. *Ach, mein liebling!*" tenderly cried the old mother, embracing her son and lovingly placing her cheek against his, "when you are asleep, you remind me of your babyhood."

"Yes," said the Margrave, nodding to Henry and confirming his mother's words as seriously as if he had often seen himself asleep.

So it was arranged that the Margrave should take only a sip of beer—say two quarts, or such a matter—just before starting to the ceremony. Then Henry, heavy at heart, left mother and son to complete the arrangements as agreed between them.

At two o'clock the Mirrored Hall was filled with ladies and gentlemen of the court. Several dignitaries and noble personages were present from near-by principalities, though there had not been time, owing to the king's haste, to send many invitations outside of Brandenburg.

The king, disdaining a throne, sat in a large chair on a dais of one step, and the queen sat in a smaller chair beside him. Her Majesty's eyes were red with weeping when she took her place beside the king. Soon again tears began to stream down her face, and she, poor woman, was so nearly prostrated that she could make no effort to stay them.

Beside the queen stood Don't Care, looking happy and very much amused. Next to Don't Care sat the Margravine of Schwedt sound asleep. At the king's left stood the Crown

Prince, on whose young face was a mask that no one could read. Beside the Crown Prince was Grumkow, clothed in true, satanic red. Back in the room, near the outer door leading to the garden, was Fritz Henry, and what his face told could have been easily read.

The room was filled, save a small space in front of the royal dais, with beautifully gowned ladies and men in gorgeous uniform. All were standing, and when the queen began to weep, most of the ladies followed her example, for they knew they were present to witness a tragedy.

After a long, painful silence, broken only by the half suppressed sobs of women, and a cough now and then from a sympathetic man, the crowd parted and left an aisle leading from a side door to the open space in front of the royal dais. Then followed another long, sob-laden period of silence, while the Margrave of Schwedt and pale Wilhelmina walked down the human aisle and took their places facing the king. When Henry saw them enter, he felt that Wilhelmina's fate was sealed.

When the princess and the Margrave had taken their places before the king, the little minister—our friend of The Tabagie—stepped

before them and offered a long prayer. After the prayer, he addressed Adolph, saying:

"Do you, Johann Adolph, Margrave of Schwedt, now plight your faith to this woman, whom you hold by the hand, and do you promise, in God's good time, to enter into the holy bonds of matrimony with her?"

The Margrave, very pale, dropped the princess's hand, stood trembling for a moment, and said:

"Before God, I do—not."

A buzz of astonishment ran through the room, and Grumkow stepped toward the king with a mixed look of terror, surprise and disgust in his face. His Majesty, hardly understanding what the Margrave had said, leaned forward in his chair and asked of the little minister:

"What does he say? What does he say?"

The moment intervening between the Margrave's brave response and the king's question had given Adolph time to summon his courage. He had need of it all, and it came to him quickly. He did not wait for the minister to answer the king's question, but cried out excitedly:

"No, Frederick William, King of Prussia and Brandenburg! I do not promise to plight my faith to the Princess Wilhelmina, though

to do so would bring happiness to my life such as I have never known. No man who is half a man would accept a woman's hand against her will. I should have notified your Majesty ere this of my intention, but I was so weak, so cowardly, so craven that I could not bring myself to face the terrors of your wrath. Now that I am brave, I am able to thank your Majesty for the great honor you have done me, and to tell you that I will not be a party to your cruelty, nor will I aid and abet that arch-villain, Baron Grumkow, in his fiendish designs against the Princess Wilhelmina, and his treasonable purposes against your Majesty. I repeat: his treasonable purposes against your Majesty."

Grumkow started angrily toward Adolph, but the Margrave, now thoroughly aroused and excited almost to the point of frenzy, met the baron half way:

"You would make me King of Prussia!" he cried. "I know your purposes, and I give you fair warning as my enemy, beware, beware!"

The Margrave held up the palm of his hand to Grumkow and stood for a full minute a very statue of warning.

Grumkow drew back from Adolph, convinced

The Margrave stood a very statue of warning

that there was more meaning in his words than appeared on the surface.

Voltaire has said that fear follows guilt and is its punishment. Grumkow was usually brave in his evil deeds, but the weight of villainy he carried on his conscience would have made a coward of any man. Following rapidly in the train of the Margrave's words, there came to Grumkow a consciousness of their truth, and the baron's one thought was that his fine plots had been discovered. So when the king rose angrily, intending to assault the Margrave, Grumkow stepped to his side, whispered a word in the royal ear, and Majesty stood still for a moment, looking as if he were about to explode.

"If you were not so great a fool, I would cane you," said his Majesty. "You shall take the girl for your wife, or I'll have you flayed alive!"

The Margravine, who had been awakened by the king's loud talking, caught his Majesty's threat of personal violence to her son, and immediately hurried to the rescue. By the time she had reached a position in front of the dais, she had fully gathered her wrath, and though naturally of a kind and jovial disposition, her wrath, when once gathered, was a

thing to be respected, and if possible avoided, even by kings.

"You would flay my son alive?" she screamed, addressing the king. "If you harm but one hair of his head, you—you cruel tyrant, you abject old fool—if you harm but one hair of his head, my uncle of Austria and my cousin of England will take your miserable little kingdom from you, and will tear your gouty limbs from your body. Flay my son, would you? Dare but to lay your hand on him, and I'll scratch—" Thereupon the Margravine stepped on the dais with evident intent to put her threat into execution. The king sought refuge behind his chair. Grumkow started to interfere, but the furious Margravine soon ran him to cover. The queen kept her chair, hardly conscious of what was happening. Don't Care was laughing heartily, and a smile of unmistakable pleasure illumined the face of the Crown Prince.

When the king was safely ensconced behind his chair, the Margravine again opened fire at long range:

"You would flay my son alive? *Ach!* Boastful words butter no parsnips, and your brave threats do not frighten me. My son and I are safe from your cruelty, your tyranny and your madness. I tell you, Frederick William, there

are two men at this court, sent here by Austria, who are false both to you and to their master. Their treason is known to every one in Brandenburg save you, who have most need to know it. Aye, their treason is known, and they may hang one of these fine days, and achieve the only good of which they are capable, by furnishing an example to other traitors!"

Several pairs of knees shook with fear when their owners heard the Margravine's words, and Grumkow, already frightened by Adolph's ominous threat, almost felt the hangman's noose about his neck, and trembled with fear such as he had never known before. Anxious to silence the old woman at any cost, Grumkow approached the king, and his Majesty, smothering his rage, carefully watched the Margravine until she had stepped backward off the dais, then resumed his chair.

"No one asked you for your daughter's hand!" continued the enraged Margravine, now screaming at the top of her voice. "Grumkow sent for us to come to Berlin, and you have never consulted the wishes of either my son or myself. You ordered your daughter to marry my son. Her disinclination is apparent to all, and the Margrave of Schwedt is too much of a man and too fine a gentleman to accept the hand

of a princess against her will. We refuse; we spurn your offer. We will not marry your daughter. If you had a hundred daughters, we would not marry them. You—you—*Ach, Gott,* I must scratch you!"

The king, showing symptoms of alarm, started to rise from his chair to seek safety behind it, but the Margravine did not carry out her threat. She closed her address to the king by repeating:

"Do not forget that my uncle of Austria and my cousin of England long for an excuse to take your miserable little kingdom from you, and to tear your wretched old body limb from limb! You know that my words are far from empty, and I defy you to lay a hand on my son, the Margrave of Schwedt!"

"She has said—much," remarked Adolph, speaking softly to himself, and blinking with a rapidity never before achieved.

The brave old Margravine bowed low to the king and hobbled back to her chair, where she sat down, almost out of breath, but with a sweet, triumphant sense of victory that brought joy to her heart and peace to her soul.

While the Margravine was fanning herself, the weeping, almost hysterical queen stepped down from the dais and embraced the brave old

woman, much to the disgust of Grumkow and the king, and greatly to the delight of every other person in the hall. Don't Care thought the whole scene was better than a play, and doubtless she was right.

While the old lady was expressing her mind to Frederick William, Sonnsfeld and one of the queen's ladies had led Wilhelmina from the frighful scene to an adjoining room.

Confusion reigned in the Mirrored Chamber. Women were whispering and weeping hysterically; men were talking, loudly approving the Margrave's manly act, and to Grumkow's ears the uproar was like the ominous rumbling of an avenging host.

"Bravo, Margrave!" "*Vive le Schwedt!*" "Noble Adolph!" with an occasional "Down with Grumkow!" came from different parts of the room, carrying terror to Grumkow's heart, and adding valor to the Margrave's ever increasing stock of courage.

"*Vive le Schwedt!*" were the sweetest sounds that had ever fallen on Adolph's ears, and they so wrought upon him that he feared neither man nor devil. Virtue certainly was its own rich reward for the Margrave.

The cries from the room had increased rather than diminished the king's anger, so after a

whispered conversation with Grumkow, he spoke as if addressing the assembled company:

"Bring the Duke of Weissenfels—bring Weissenfels! I'll not have my will thwarted by an old woman and a fat fool!"

The king, having addressed no one in particular, no one offered to fetch his Grace of Weissenfels, so his Majesty again cried out:

"Bring the Duke of Weissenfels, I say! Do you hear me? Bring the Duke of Weissenfels!"

Still no one offered to go, so the Margrave, who had grown calm, smiled, shrugged his shoulders, bent low before the king, and said with mock humility:

"With your Majesty's kind permission, I will bring the duke."

"Go, go!" cried the king. "Don't stand there like a fool gaping at me!"

Adolph turned toward the outer door, and when he saw Henry, cried joyfully:

"Come with me! Come with me! Of all the men in the world, I want you most! Come, come! You shall see! You may help."

Lackeys opened the door, and the hatless Margrave, followed by Henry, strode across the garden to the wing of the palace in which the Duke of Weissenfels was lodged. His Grace had refused to be present at the ceremony

of betrothal, and, with two congenial spirits, had remained in his room, nursing his chagrin, and cuddling his wrath against Adolph.

The Margrave hurriedly climbed the narrow flight of stairs leading to the duke's room and entered, closely followed by Henry. Without a word of warning, he walked up to the duke, who was sitting at a table. The Margrave was going to speak, but Weissenfels forestalled him:

"You think you have won," cried his Grace, fiercely. "*Sacrément!* you shall never live to enjoy your bride! You beast! You hog! You poltroon!"

The duke struck the Margrave with his cane, and began to rise threateningly. Adolph returned the blow, striking Weissenfels in the face with the palm of his hand. Thereupon the duke and his friends snatched their swords from the rack, and prepared to attack the intruder. Henry quickly drew his sword and stepped between the Margrave and his foes.

"One at a time, gentlemen; one at a time!" said Henry, easily keeping the duke at bay with his sword point.

"Yes, one at a time and at this time!" cried the excited Margrave, again striking the duke, and drawing his sword. "And this one first!"

By that time the duke was beside himself with anger, and thirsting for blood, was striving to attack the Margrave. Henry held the Margrave back, while the duke's friends led his Grace to the opposite side of the room. Each of the principals was trembling with rage, and the duke was blaspheming in a manner to congeal a Christian's blood. In an unlucky moment the duke's friends relaxed their hold, and he rushed across the room with drawn sword, evidently intending to kill the Margrave. Weissenfels made a lunge that would have ended Adolph's days had not Henry parried the thrust. The duke kept up his attack, but Henry's skill with the sword was so superior that his Grace was beaten backward toward his friends. Again the duke came forward, but his anger so blinded him that he was almost powerless against Henry, who could have killed him easily. Again the duke fell back. By the time Weissenfels was beginning his second retreat, the Margrave, who had recovered his self-possession, laughed and cried out:

"*Ach,* let him come! Let him come! He wants to die!"

With a nimbleness not to be expected, Adolph followed up his receding foe. Like a flash of light, his sword shot forward, and so great was

the weight behind it that its point protruded from the duke's back. The duke fell forward toward the Margrave, who thrust him back, and his Grace of Weissenfels fell to the floor dead, with the Margrave's sword standing in his body.

Adolph had kept his word; Wilhelmina was free.

The Margrave was as cool as if he had been doing nothing more exciting than drinking a few quarts of beer.

"Permit me," said he, bowing politely and addressing the duke's friends, who had sought refuge from the raging lion of Schwedt in the farthest corner of the room. "Permit me. My sword, I fear, would inconvenience his Grace when they go to bury him."

The Margrave smiled broadly, drew his sword from the duke's body, calmly wiped it on the table cover, and again addressing the men in the corner, asked:

"Do either or both of you gentlemen feel aggrieved?"

Ah, the Margrave had come to his own. From a gentle lamb he had grown to be a devastating lion. His grotesqueness of form and face had all disappeared, and he stood awaiting a reply, a beautiful example of what

high courage and exalted emotions will do for a man physically, mentally and morally.

One of the men in the corner stepped forward, saying to Henry:

"I have no grievance against his Highness of Schwedt. I regret the duke's uncalled-for attack. He has paid the penalty. He has been threatening to kill the Margrave before the wedding. We have tried to show him his error, and now he has suffered its consequences. The Margrave of Schwedt was in no way to blame. His Grace of Weissenfels was the unprovoked aggressor."

Henry felt that the moment had arrived for arranging evidence that would protect the Margrave against the charge of murder, should one be made, so he said:

"A few minutes since, the Margrave of Schwedt refused the hand of the princess, and at the king's command, came to notify the Duke of Weissenfels that his Majesty wished his Grace to take the Margrave's place."

Adolph, who was standing like a triumphant gladiator, resting his sword-point on the floor, looked up at Henry's face in wonder and was about to speak, but Henry silenced him by a motion of the hand.

A minute or two of awkward silence followed,

during which the Margrave felt a re-action from his excitement. Then he spoke dreamily, absent-mindedly, as if he were only half conscious of his words.

"What this man needs," said Adolph, touching the duke's body with his foot, "is a coffin. You must not fail to have it made long enough. In the language of Henry of France, I might say, 'God! How long he is!' I am—I am very sorry—very sorry that I had to do it."

The Margrave relaxed his heroic pose; his sword dropped to the floor; he covered his face with his hands; his flesh quivered spasmodically, and tears trickled between his fingers.

Henry took up the sword, grasped Adolph's arm, led him from the room, and they went down the narrow flight of steps to the garden.

When they were well away from the building, Henry said:

"My dear friend, you have kept your word to the letter. But you must be ruled by me. You must hear what I have to say and you must remember it. You did not attack the duke; you went to him with the king's message, and he attacked you; you did not intend to kill him; you—"

"Oh, yes, I did," answered Adolph, sobbing; "I did intend to kill him. Murder has been in

my heart ever since the evening in Ritter's summer-house. I did not intend it as it happened. I expected to insult him and hoped to force him to come with me to the garden, where I would have killed him, though I expected to give my life for the privilege of doing it."

"That may all be true," said Henry, "but no one knows of your intention or its reason. The duke's two friends who were present during the fight, acknowledge that Weissenfels was the aggressor. They and I will vouch for the fact that you killed him in self-defense. Our evidence will save you a great deal of trouble, and will serve to lighten the burden of sorrow in the heart of the princess. She would die of remorse if she knew that you had deliberately murdered the Duke of Weissenfels to save her. She would blame herself for his death. She may suspect your real motive, but if she believes that you killed him in defense of your own life, and if she learns that he was the aggressor, she will be glad that it was the duke and not you that died."

"But I went there to kill him," protested Adolph.

"Yes, yes," continued Henry; "I know you did, but the duke would have killed you if he

could, and you killed him in self-defense. What your original intentions were are no part of what really happened, and no one will ever know of them unless you want to crow like a rooster, out of pure vanity, and wish to add to the burden of unhappiness the princess already bears."

"*Ach, Gott*, no," sighed Adolph. "I sometimes tickle my vanity by indulging the fancy that I am not the fool people think I am, but when it comes to the test, I always find that I am more than a fool; I am an idiot. You are right. The course you advise is the only one that will not add to Wilhelmina's unhappiness. She is to be considered, and she only. Why did I not at once see the wisdom of your suggestion? But it is not too late."

"So we'll tell the story of the duke's death as it happened," said Henry, "and no one save you and I shall ever know that you intended to kill him when you left the Mirrored Chamber."

"Your advice is good," sighed Adolph. "Please hasten to the king with the news. I'll go to my room. I'm almost as dead as Weissenfels. You know my heart is very weak. Please come to me soon, my friend of friends. I need you."

The Margrave entered the palace by a small door leading to a privy stairway, and when he reached his room, fell half conscious on his bed.

Fritz Henry hurried to the Mirrored Chamber, where he found the king waiting sullenly for Weissenfels. The queen was weeping. Grumkow, standing near the king, was in deep thought, his face expressing an intensity of fear that could have come only from a stricken conscience. Great excitement prevailed among the guests, but when Henry went to the king, a deathlike silence fell upon the room, broken only by the queen's sobs.

"Will your Majesty grant me a word privately?" he asked.

The king assented, and Henry told him that the Margrave had gone to the Duke of Weissenfels to deliver his Majesty's message; that the duke had made a murderous attack upon the Margrave, who, to save his own life, had been compelled to kill him.

The king's slow brain did not fully comprehend what Henry said, and after a moment's silence, his Majesty spoke in a loud voice that could be heard all over the room:

"Schwedt has killed Weissenfels, say you?"

The queen screamed and fainted. The Mar-

gravine of Schwedt sprang to her feet, crying out excitedly:

"*Mein Gott, ach, mein Gott!* What is it all?"

Several women in the audience fainted. Men crowded about the royal dais and pandemonium itself set in. Grumkow sprang to the king's side. His Majesty turned his attention to the queen for a moment, but when she recovered sufficiently to be taken from the room, he stepped down from the dais and went to Fritz Henry.

"Let us get away from this howling mob," growled the king, addressing Henry and Grumkow.

His Majesty started to leave the room, indicating that Henry should follow. Many of the guests crowded about the king, eager to learn the particulars of what had happened, but he cursed them and drove them off with his cane.

When the king, Grumkow and Henry reached a private room, His Majesty turned to Henry, saying:

"Now tell me all about it, and don't lie, as you value your life."

Henry drew away from the king, bent low before him, and answered:

"If your Majesty fears that I shall lie to you,

I advise you to find some one else to tell you of the unfortunate affair, and I beg that I may have your permission to withdraw."

"He isn't afraid of the devil," mumbled the king. "I did not say that you would lie. I said you must not lie. Go on, in God's name, and tell me the truth, whatever it may be. Go on, and do not fear to speak the truth."

Henry then told the king the full particulars of all that had happened in the duke's room, and referred his Majesty to the duke's friends for confirmation of the story.

"*Ach,* well, I'm glad he's dead," sighed the king. "I have always hated him. He was an infidel, and I'm glad he's out of my way."

With this remark his Majesty left the room, and was never again heard to speak the name of the Duke of Weissenfels.

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER THE BATTLE

The refusal of the Margrave to marry the princess, and the death of Weissenfels, left Wilhelmina without a suitor, and at once raised the queen's hopes of reviving the English marriage project. That, of course, was the one alliance Grumkow wished to avoid, so on the evening of the eventful betrothal day, the baron's soul was wrapped in gloom. Either Schwedt or Weissenfels would have been the keystone to the arch of his plans, but the events of one day had taken them both from him. In addition to his loss, the words and threats of the Margrave and the Margravine rang ominously in his ears, falling like the knell of doom upon his soul. It was a sad day for Grumkow, and the night was sleepless. To avoid the English union, the princess must be married, and if possible, her husband must be a man whom Grumkow could use. Where was there such a man? That was one of the questions which shrouded Grumkow's soul in gloom.

On leaving the king, Henry hurried to the room of the Margrave, and found that valiant

warrior sound asleep as the result of many hurried libations of beer, taken with true intent to drown his care. Being unable to rouse the Margrave, he went to see the Crown Prince, who had been taken back to his garret prison, and there Henry narrated the details of the fight.

"Who would have thought that the fat fool had it in him?" asked Fritz, gazing meditatively out the window.

"I do not think he is a fool," said Henry. "I think he is one of the finest characters I have ever known, and I am glad to call him my friend."

"He has been Mina's friend," said the prince, suddenly awakening to the importance of the situation. "Do you know, I am just beginning to see the quality and the quantity of the Margrave's extraordinary day's work. He has completely upset all of Grumkow's plans, and has liberated Wilhelmina, at least for a time. Brave Margrave! Noble Margrave! He must be insane!"

"I think no man was ever more sane than the Margrave has been throughout the whole affair," said Henry. "He was greatly excited, as you could see, in the Mirrored Chamber, but he was sane, and after he killed the duke, was

so cool that he laughed when he drew his sword from the body, and apologized for relieving him of the inconvenient weapon."

"Tell him to look to his safety," said the Crown Prince. "Grumkow will not easily forgive the injury, and revenge, though it may be delayed, will be sure."

"I fear you are right," returned Henry, "and I also fear that Adolph will be an easy mark. He is apt to fall into any net Grumkow may spread for him. His only protection lies in the fact that he is related to the Emperor of Austria, Grumkow's real master; therefore the baron's revenge cannot be taken openly. I believe the king is greatly relieved at the outcome of affairs. His order to the princess to marry Schwedt or Weissenfels, I am sure, was wholly the result of Grumkow's intolerable influence. Sometimes I cannot help believing that the king is under Grumkow's spell, and is not a free agent when that arch-fiend practises on his weakness and manipulates his prejudices."

"I have known that to be true for a long time," said the Crown Prince. "If it is not true, my father is a greater fiend than Grumkow. Sometimes I am sorry for my father, for I frequently catch glimpses of real love in

his heart for Mina and for me. Grumkow is at the bottom of all of our trouble, and if Schwedt would only kill him, I should fall on my face before Adolph, and place his heavy foot upon my neck."

Henry would have given any price for a word with the princess, but he knew he could not have it. His good fortune did, however, lead him to Mlle. Sonnsfeld as he was leaving the prince's garret. She was hastening to the prince with a message from Wilhelmina, telling him of the turn affairs had taken. Fritz Henry stopped the maid, and eagerly asked news of her mistress.

"She is in bed and ill," answered Sonnsfeld, "but she will soon be well. The cloud has passed for a time, and I hope she may now have a few days of rest."

"I should like to send word to her—a letter, if—if possible," said Henry, hesitating to speak plainly to Sonnsfeld.

"You need not fear to speak your mind to me," said Kate. "I know all. The princess told me. To convince you that I know, I can, if you wish, tell you about the garden house at Ritter's. I will gladly take a letter for you."

Henry's impulse to kiss the girl was restrained only by motives of policy.

"If you will meet me just after dark at the privy stairway leading from the apartments of the princess, I shall be glad to take your message, and I may have one for you," said Sonnsfeld, glancing up at Henry's face. "I feel sure it will be as great a pleasure to my mistress to give as to receive, for she has spoken of you many times to-day."

The girl hurried away, and Henry went to the Margrave's room, hoping that sleep would have dissipated at least a part of the fumes of the beer. When he succeeded in arousing Adolph, there was a moment of blear-eyed confusion, followed by a semi-comatose, somewhat cloudy period of cavernous yawns, which in turn was succeeded by the dawning sun of intelligence. The sun, when once it began to rise, rapidly climbed up the horizon of the Margrave's mind, achieved the noon of clear conception, and Adolph was awake. His excitement had all passed away, and the humorous side of life again presented itself to his view. The wonted smile, which many persons called a grin, spread itself over his face. He rubbed his eyes, rose, looked regretfully at his shoes, knowing that the arduous task of getting them

on his feet was before him, sighed, sat down on the edge of his bed, looked up at Henry, and said:

"*Ach, Gott!* I have done—much."

"Very much," assented Henry.

There was a long pause.

"Wha—wha—what did Stumpy say?" asked Adolph, speaking through a yawn.

"I told him all about the fight," answered Henry. "He said, 'I'm glad he is dead. I always hated him', and with that he turned on his heel and walked away. But I thought Grumkow would drop dead of an apoplexy. If he had done so, the day would have been the most glorious in Prussian history."

"*Ach,* the devil can't die," responded the Margrave, still giving vent to an occasional yawn, "and Grumkow is the devil *in propria persona.*"

"I quite agree with you," said Henry.

While the Margrave was struggling to put on his unruly shoes, he said:

"Tell me of the princess." There was a moaning cadence in his voice; he dropped his shoe to the floor, covered his face with his hands and fell back on the bed. He was the picture of woe, though a moment before he had been laughing.

"Sonnsfeld tells me her mistress is ill," said Henry, "but assures me that she will soon be well. To be relieved suddenly of the burden she has borne for several months is enough to prostrate her, but joy never kills, and she will soon recover from the shock."

The Margrave did not answer, but lay moaning on the bed. After a long silence, Henry said:

"She has great cause to be thankful to you, Margrave. You kept your promise when it did not seem possible for you to accomplish anything. What a tremendous scene you raised when you defied the king! Adolph, you are the bravest man I ever knew."

"It was not bravery that prompted me," said Adolph, rising again and sitting on the edge of his bed. "It was desperation. I dared not take the princess for myself, and I would have died a thousand deaths before leaving her to Weissenfels. You see it was fear, not bravery, that drove me on. From this time forth, I suppose I shall be expected to live up to the standard of what I did to-day."

He breathed a sigh, placed his hand on his heart as if in pain, and continued. "*Ach,* that would be hard work, and I hope my friends will not expect it of me. It would be too hard

for me. I like my comfort, my mother and my beer. Love and courage are not for Adolph. He flew to-day; he soared high, but for the rest of his life he'll walk—or sit. Adolph is tired."

The Margrave again became silent for a moment. Still sitting on the edge of the bed, he sighed deeply, shook his head mournfully, and spoke, as if to himself:

"Why did I ever leave my dear, restful Schwedt? My mother coaxed me, shamed me and misled me. True, she did it out of love for me, but she was wrong, and there's no good excuse for being wrong. Love is not for me. *Ach, Gott!* Think of my condition, my friend," he said, turning to Henry. "Imagine, if you can, a man starving for food, yearning for even one little morsel to stay his gnawing. That of itself would be hard enough; but if he takes his place at a beautiful table, covered with delicious food, from which he may, if he will, satisfy his cravings, but for reasons self-imposed, will not take a morsel, then—then he has made a mistake. He should have chosen hell. He would have been more comfortable there."

Again the Margrave threw himself on the bed and covered his face with his hands.

Henry waited until he rose again, then taking

him by the hand, led him to a chair at the window, and sat down near him.

"Grumkow will not forgive you for what you have done, and his revenge will be sure if you do not leave Berlin, or take steps to avert the consequences of his hatred," said Henry.

"I am sure you are right, and—and I want a copy of the letter you showed me. That will be the only step I need take. I shall have the devil in my power. It will be the first time in the history of the world that man has ever shackled the devil. Come, come, let me have the copy. Here are paper, quill and ink. Fetch me the letter and I will copy it."

"I fear—" began Henry, but the Margrave interrupted him.

"Fetch it, I say. *Gott,* man! Can't you trust me, even after to-day?"

"I'll bring the letter at once," answered Henry, leaving the Margrave's room.

When Henry returned, Adolph put on his large spectacles and began laboriously copying the letter. Fully half an hour was required, but when the copy was finished, it was like copperplate, so perfect was the penmanship. Meantime, Henry sat at the window, looking down upon the garden, thinking of the Mar-

grave's metaphor of the hungry man who would not eat.

Longing fathers hope, and hope is the mother of dreams. But Henry's dreams were shattered all too quickly by the Margrave, who came to his side with a joyful laugh and a dancing step, exclaiming:

"Now, I have the devil in fetters. I do not fear him. Let us compare. I will read my copy and you read the original."

The Margrave read the copy, which proved to be correct.

"Ach, there are the devil's shackles," he cried joyfully, as he folded the paper and placed it carefully in a pocket of his waistcoat. "The devil may not know for some time, perhaps for many days, that he is shackled. But would you not give a good round sum to see him squirm and struggle, and belch forth fire and sulphurous smoke when he feels the irons tightening about him?"

"I hope you do not expect to crush Grumkow by showing this letter to the king," said Henry.

"I do not," answered the Margrave, swaggering about the room in the pride of his strength. "If I fire my gun by showing the letter to the king, and by mischance fail to kill the devil, his satanic majesty would be loose

again, and Adolph of Schwedt would become his imp. No, no; I'm no such fool. A *loaded* gun is a fearsome thing. Wait till my opportunity comes; then watch for satanic convolutions such as the world has not hitherto witnessed."

As soon as darkness had fallen, Fritz Henry hurried to the garden, when, after a short time, he had the great pleasure of seeing Sonnsfeld emerge from the stairway door. She gave him a letter, received one in return, and soon afterwards two hearts were happy despite the fact that they had no right to be other than miserable.

The next day Henry and the Crown Prince accompanied the king to Spandau Castle, where they remained two or three weeks without hearing news from Berlin.

Wilhelmina's marriage, the Margrave's bold refusal and Weissenfels' death all seemed to have been dismissed from the king's mind. Trouble was brewing with King George over a few loads of hay that had been stolen by Prussian subjects from a disputed tract of ground lying between Brandenburg and Hannover. King Frederick William's entire attention was given to drilling recruits, preparatory to war if it should come.

Meanwhile affairs at court were moving along with a smoothness which would have been lacking had the king been at home. Wilhelmina soon recovered her health, and with Fritz Henry's letter hidden lovingly in her bosom, was happier than she had been for many a day.

When Sonnsfeld delivered the letter, she said:

"He was so handsome that I had half a mind to tell him he might send a kiss to you by me."

"I should be glad to have one," answered Mina, laughing, "but he would not have sent it by you."

"Why?"

"Because, to send me a kiss by you, he must first kiss you, and he would not do that."

"Am I not pretty enough to tempt him?" asked the wise Sonnsfeld, knowing full well that she was decidedly pretty.

"Yes, Kate," answered Mina, "you are very pretty with your big blue eyes, your red cheeks and redder lips, but no one is pretty enough to tempt him. However, I don't want you to be trying."

"You're a jealous person," retorted Sonnsfeld.

"I fear I am," replied the princess. "But I do want to keep all of his love while I may.

It will be the one bright spot in my whole life. Kate, did you ever dream of what life would be as the wife of the man you loved, who loved you?"

"Yes, Mina," responded Sonnsfeld, breathing a low sigh. "Save for my dreams about you, I have no other occupation."

"You have no lover?" asked Wilhelmina, looking quickly up at Kate's face. "So why do you dream?"

"I dream for the same reason that every other girl dreams. Why did you dream before you met the Handsome Captain?"

"I did not dream—that is, I did not dream so much as now."

"Ah, well, my sweet Mina, dream while you can. You may live all your life through hoping for a reality that will exceed your dreams in happiness, but if you find it, you will be luckier than most women. What men get out of life that is better than dreams, I do not know. Dreams are not for them. I fancy the angels sent dreams into the world for woman's especial benefit, to compensate her for enduring life's terrible realities. I wonder who the Handsome Captain is?"

"He is an Englishman of rank," answered Wilhelmina, "though I do not know his degree,

and confess I have not given the subject a thought."

"How did you learn that he is an Englishman?" asked Kate.

"I knew it when I first heard him speak English," replied Wilhelmina. "His name is English, and Don't Care said that father told her he was English. The Margrave also says he learned it from what the captain said. What has become of the Margrave? I have not seen him since the momentous day. I never knew as rare a character so thoroughly disguised, but as his wife I should have died."

"A woman may endure a great deal without dying," said Kate. "At times God seems to be stingy of death in dealing with us."

"I wonder who will be the next candidate for my hand," queried Wilhelmina.

"Since Don't Care won't have the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, the king may thrust him upon you," suggested Kate.

"They say he, too, is a most repulsive man," replied Wilhelmina. "I wish I could defy the king, and disobey him and wheedle him as Don't Care does."

"A person must be born coarse of grain and selfish of heart to be a successful bully," answered Kate.

"Whatever is required, I wish I had," returned Wilhelmina. "Don't Care refused to consider the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, and the matter was dropped. How, suppose you, did she learn about him?"

After a moment's hesitancy, Sonnsfeld replied:

"She got her information from the Handsome Captain. She said he told her that the Prince of Bayreuth was very repulsive in person, but she laughed and said she feared the Handsome Captain was jealous and was trying to prejudice her against his rival. She also said she did not care; that she did not want the Hereditary Prince, nor any man unless she could get the Handsome Captain, who, she avowed, was dying of love for her. The Margrave confirmed the captain's report of the Hereditary Prince, and from that time forth, Don't Care would hear no more of the projected marriage with Bayreuth."

"It does seem," said Wilhelmina, sadly, "that when God gives a man high rank, he withholds all other good qualities."

"Your brother is an exception," suggested Sonnsfeld.

"Yes, he is an exception. He seems to me to

be perfect in every way," agreed Wilhelmina, readily. "The poor Margrave's defects are all physical, but—"

"We will not talk about the Margrave," interrupted Sonnsfeld. "Let us talk about the Handsome Captain, and then we will go to sleep." And Kate's program was carried out.

CHAPTER XIX

ADOLPH SHACKLES THE DEVIL

While Henry and the prince were at Spandau Castle, affairs at court were readjusting themselves to the new conditions. The king, who made periodical visits to Berlin, treated the Margrave as usual, for he liked him notwithstanding his contempt for him which was profound and unconcealed. He seemed to have forgotten the Margrave's part in the affairs of the day of disappointment. Perhaps, if Adolph had been of more importance in royal eyes, Frederick William would have resented his contumacy, but the king was able to control his violence when he knew it was to his advantage, and may have made the Margrave's insignificance an excuse for forgiving him.

To injure Adolph and to offend the Margravine of Schwedt, Prussian Majesty felt sure would be giving England and Austria their much desired pretext. Therefore state policy and indifference to so contemptible a person as Adolph prompted the king to overlook his great affront, and to treat him as if nothing unusual had happened.

It was easily shown by the evidence of the duke's companions that the killing of Weissenfels had been in self-defense, and as his Grace's relatives felt deeply obliged to Adolph, the matter was dropped. So the good folks from Schwedt remained in the palace, tolerated if not honored guests.

Soon after the eventful day, the Margravine suggested to her son the advisability of returning to the quiet precincts of Schwedt, but Adolph stoutly refused to move.

"You would have me come," he answered, "and being here, I intend to remain till I am quite ready to go."

Grumkow refused to speak to Adolph save to insult him whenever an opportunity presented, and it was evident to every one that the king's apathetic view of the Margrave's great work did not pervade the heart of the baron.

Thus much for the situation in the palace touching Adolph. He seemed to be safe, but the cunning of the devil is of a subtle, dangerous quality, and is deceitful in appearances.

When the queen recovered from the shock of the scene in the Mirrored Hall, she was a very happy woman. With Schwedt and Weissenfels out of the way, the beloved English pro-

ject stood a chance of revival, and her Majesty, much to Grumkow's annoyance, lost no time in beginning the resuscitating process. The king, who was anxious to avoid war with England, was almost convinced by the queen that the renewal of marriage negotiations would be the best way of pacifying King George. He listened with considerable patience to his wife, though he took no steps toward reopening the English negotiations. Grumkow was able to see to that.

Wilhelmina's marriage once more became a living issue, and was discussed in The Tabagie one evening, the king having come over from Spandau for that purpose. Grumkow dwelt eloquently on the wrongs Prussia had suffered at the hands of England. He spoke with tears of the insufferable insults that had been put upon "our gracious, just, our wise and gentle king by the English tyrant, who would trample Prussia under his despotic heel." Grumkow's eloquence easily brought the king back to his old-time frenzy, and though his Majesty did not explicitly declare that nothing would be done in relation to the English marriage, he showed very clearly that his distaste for the project and his hatred for King George still existed.

The specter of the English marriage frightened Grumkow, since that alliance would effectually put an end to the fine schemes for his own aggrandizement, and would disgrace him with his real master, the Emperor of Austria.

To prevent it, Grumkow must find another husband for Wilhelmina. Schwedt and Weissenfels being out of the way, there was no man at hand who would serve his purpose better than August of Saxony. So in desperation, and out of sheer, poison-hearted hatred for the beautiful princess, this incarnation of Satan proposed King August, the moral leper of Christendom, for Mina's husband. Adolph was present at The Tabagie when Grumkow's suggestion was put forward, and again he was in trouble. Having grown careless of consequences, he ran to the head of the table where Grumkow was standing beside the king's chair. He interrupted the baron by shaking his fist under his nose, and after that aggressive movement, turned to the king, exclaiming:

"Why do you not kill your daughter? She had a thousand times better be dead than married to the man this—this arch-fiend suggests."

Brave Margrave! Noble Margrave! There was not in all Brandenburg and Prussia an-

other man who would have dared speak those words unless it were the Handsome Captain.

"Take this man away and put him to bed!" growled the king.

Two Tabagians led the Margrave from the room, while he shouted anathema against Grumkow.

After the Margrave's expulsion from The Tabagie, he was not put to bed, but was permitted to go his way alone, so he went immediately to the queen's boudoir. When a lady in waiting met him at the door, he sent word to her Majesty that he wished to speak to her on a subject of great importance, and was at once admitted. Standing before the queen, hat in hand, and almost breathless, Adolph began to explain his mission.

"I have just been put out of The Tabagie," he exclaimed, excitedly, "and have hastened to tell your Majesty that Grumkow has suggested the King of Poland for your daughter's husband."

"Which daughter?" exclaimed Don't Care, who was seated at the harpsichord.

"The Princess Wilhelmina," responded Adolph.

"Oh!" said Don't Care, turning again to the

harpsichord, and running her fingers carelessly over the keys.

"Stop that noise!" cried the queen. "Where is your sister?"

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Don't Care, without turning her face toward the queen. "She is in bed, I suppose. Shall I carry the welcome news to her?"

"No," said the queen sharply. "Keep still. Now, you—you—" waving her hand toward the Margrave, "go on, go on."

"Madam, I have told you all there is to tell," answered Adolph, blinking and standing on one foot to rest the other. "Grumkow proposes King August; your husband seems to take kindly to the proposition, and curses England and the English marriage. That is all. I have said—much."

"It is, indeed, much," answered the queen. "What can we do?"

"If your Majesty will allow me to speak, I, who am of so little moment in your eyes, may be able to make a suggestion which may be worth hearing."

"In God's name, speak," answered the queen. "What you have to say may be worth listening to. I haven't anything else to do just now. Go on."

"If your Majesty insists on trying to revive the English marriage—"

"For the love of God!" cried the queen. "Is this fool, too, going to try to talk me out of it?"

"Shall I proceed?" asked the Margrave, with a flash of anger.

"Yes, yes, go on," returned the queen, impatiently.

"If your Majesty insists at this time on putting forward the English marriage, you will surely precipitate the union with Saxony. You have already learned the brutal strength of Grumkow's hand. What now would be the fate of the princess if I had failed to come to her rescue? King August will not refuse her hand as I did, and I may not be able to kill his Majesty of Poland. Listen to the advice of one who has proved himself your friend. Drop the English project at once if you would not bring ruin on yourself and on the princess, and try to find for your daughter a husband more suitable than King August."

Don't Care rose from the harpsichord, and ran laughing to the queen.

"Let me present to my sister my prince—the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth," said the little

princess, who seemed to look upon the situation as a rare jest.

Much to Don't Care's surprise, the Margrave cried joyfully: "That is the very thing, your Majesty. It is a wise suggestion. The Prince of Bayreuth is a fine gentleman."

"Oh, *is* he?" exclaimed Don't Care. "You told me he was not. Perhaps I don't want to give him up."

The Margrave saw his mistake, and silently thanked the princess for interrupting him.

"Will your Highness kindly permit me to finish?" he said, lifting a protesting palm to Don't Care. "I was about to say that the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth is a fine gentleman compared with the King of Poland. He is not handsome, and perhaps he is not to a lady's taste, but he is a deeply pious man, very honest and very just."

"Do you know him?" asked the queen.

"Yes, your Majesty," returned Adolph.

"Tell me of him," commanded the queen.

Adolph paused a moment to refresh his halting memory: "He is tall, well educated, very pious, very honest and very poor. As I have said, his personal appearance is—well, he is better off in that respect than I; God knows, better off than I—much."

"We'll think of what you have said," returned the queen. "It will interfere with Grumkow's plan, at least, for a time. Good-night, and thank you. Your intentions are good, and your advice may be—may be even better. I am sorry I spoke sharply to you."

Adolph left the queen and went to his room. There he lay down on his bed, heavy of heart, and tried to go to sleep. Finding sleep impossible, he rose and left the palace by a postern to which he had the key. After wandering about for an hour, he sought his favorite tavern, "The Big Sausage," drank several quarts of good, rich beer, and soon was sleeping like a child.

Owing to Grumkow's watchfulness, the queen was unable to see the king for several days after the interview with Adolph, but when she saw his Majesty, she told him that she had heard of Grumkow's kind suggestion touching the Saxony alliance. She also told him her mind on the subject. The king listened for a time and broke forth in storm.

"I'm tired of hearing the English marriage drummed into my ears, and I tell you I'll not endure it another day. You are so great a fool that you will never drop it till the girl is married. She shall marry at once—August or a

lackey. It is all one to me, so that I get her married and stop your maddening harangue about the English marriage. England, never! Any one else—very well. But make the choice at once, for married she shall be immediately. If you do not choose a husband for her who is satisfactory to me, August of Saxony shall have her. If she refuses—she already knows what her fate will be, and she knows what will befall her brother and her friends."

The king left, and Wilhelmina, who was present during the interview, was once more in despair.

Presently Don't Care laughed and called to Wilhelmina across the room: "Take my prince, Mina. I'll go single all my life rather than have my sister marry King August." Don't Care's cruelty was by no means the least of Mina's troubles.

There seemed nothing better to do than to accept the offer, so within a few days the queen and Wilhelmina notified his Majesty that the princess would marry the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth if their choice met with the king's approval.

When the subject was brought up in The Tabagie, Grumkow did not approve, consequently the king was averse, so word was sent

to the queen and the princess, notifying them that another choice must be made.

The next evening before supper, the Margrave, who had heard the verdict at The Tabagie, presented himself at the door of Grumkow's house, and asked to see him. Admittance was refused until word was sent in by Adolph that he bore a message from the queen. Then he was ushered into the baron's presence, and bravely entered upon his dangerous and desperate undertaking.

"The queen and the Princess Wilhelmina wish me to say that their choice has fallen on the Prince of Bayreuth, and that the princess will marry none other."

"They know the consequences," growled Grumkow; "and if that is all you came to say, be gone!"

"I have more to say—much," answered Adolph, breathing heavily, and suppressing his anger. "Please read this copy of a letter written by you some time ago to Madame Ramen."

Grumkow sprang to his feet at the mention of Ramen's name, but quickly resumed his chair, and by a great effort composed himself. He took the paper from Adolph, read it and handed it back with the remark:

"I know nothing of the letter. It is not in my handwriting."

"I hope you do not suppose I would be so great a fool as to entrust you with the original," asked Adolph, smiling and folding the paper. "The original is not in Berlin. It is in the hands of a powerful man, a prince, whose word the king will accept unhesitatingly. If his Majesty does not approve the queen's choice of the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, or if by any chance evil befalls me, my friend, who holds the original of this letter, will present it to the king."

"I don't care when the letter is given to the king," said Grumkow, with all the coolness of innocence. "It was not written by me, and I shall pay no attention to it nor to your threats. Others have tried the same game with Grumkow, and they are now living in underground dungeons in Spandau Castle. I have a mind to have you kicked from my house."

The Margrave had regained his self-possession, and was as calm as the baron.

"If you lay a hand on me, Baron Grumkow, I swear before God that the original of this letter will be placed before the king, and will be published to the people of Brandenburg and Prussia. It will be corroborated by evidence

that cannot be doubted, evidence that will hang you and a score of your confederates, including your mistress, Madame Ramen. I am not speaking idly. Your plots are known to many persons in Brandenburg, and you are living over a mine."

"Your ravings disgust me! Go!" shouted Grumkow, rising and pacing the room nervously.

The Margrave, following closely at the baron's heels, continued:

"If by to-morrow night at ten o'clock, the king has not given his consent to the marriage of the Princess Wilhelmina and the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, the original of this letter, and the evidence to corroborate it, will be sent broadcast over the entire land, and you will be unable to reach the borders of Brandenburg in time to save your life. Death hangs over you, Baron Grumkow, and after death, the bottomless pit of hell. You may, if you wish, assassinate me, but you will gain nothing, for I am no part of the evidence against you. I simply hold your enemies in check for the purpose of gaining my point. If you assassinate me, you precipitate your troubles, for in all the world there will be no one that can save you. The original of the letter and the evidence to support it will

be used to hang you. Take my advice, Baron Grumkow; if you hear of my death, lose no time in getting out of Brandenburg. You know that you wrote the original letter. I need not try to convince you that I also know it. How it came to the hands that now hold it need not trouble you. By to-morrow night I shall expect a favorable answer from the king. *Au revoir,* Baron."

When the Margrave started to the door, Grumkow called him back, but he would not return. With head erect, and heart throbbing with pride, he walked from the house to *Zur Groszen Wurst,* where he proceeded with earnest deliberation to get himself very drunk. He succeeded—much.

The next morning the Margrave was out of bed early, bright and alert as any boy. He ordered a great dish of big sausage with cabbage and garlic fried in vinegar and oil, that being the inn's *chef d'œuvre,* and thus strengthened, sallied forth for the day.

In the evening he attended The Tabagie, where the proposition of the queen to offer Wilhelmina's hand to the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth was to be discussed.

Before the session began, Grumkow approached Adolph very civilly, and in the gra-

cious manner of which he was master, invited him to a conference apart from the other members.

"My dear Margrave," said Grumkow, affectionately placing his hand on Adolph's arm, "you have been deceived by some designing person, who has tried to induce you to believe that the letter you saw and copied was written by me. I am sure you are honest in your belief, but my dear Margrave, pause a moment and think. Do you suppose I could be so great a fool as to write that letter?"

"Every man is a fool in spots," answered Adolph, throwing out his chest and proudly lifting his head as he delivered himself of the truism.

"But I am not a fool in that spot," insisted the baron, smiling kindly.

"*Ach,* don't argue with me," Adolph answered, impatiently; "I know the letter is yours, and—"

"Speak softly," interrupted Grumkow. "Speak softly; these fools may hear you."

"I know the letter is yours," said Adolph, ignoring Grumkow's request, and speaking in a loud voice. "I know it is yours and you know that I know it. I am waiting to learn what the king does. If he fails to act

to-night in accordance with my suggestion to you, my one word of advice is: beware. The person to whom you wrote the letter has long been receiving money from your enemies, and is a traitor to you. She will swear to you that she is true, of course, and you will believe her, as you have done many times before when she was false and laughed at your credulity. I'll show you your fool-spot, Baron. Those who are false to others never understand that others may be false to them. There is always, Baron, a blind self-conceit that goes with deep-rooted villainy. Beware of delay. I have said—much."

Grumkow still smiled, and after trying in vain to induce the Margrave to admit that the letter might possibly be a forgery, took another course.

"I am sure the king will agree to the marriage with the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, but I doubt if he can be brought to do so to-night. Now, my dear Margrave," continued Grumkow, almost begging for the favor he was asking, "give us till the day after to-morrow at noon."

"Granted," said the Margrave, with a condescending, magnanimous air.

"And my dear Margrave, although the let-

ter of which you have spoken is an infamous forgery, it might make trouble for me, therefore I would place this condition to the king's consent; the letter must be delivered to me tomorrow."

"Baron, I do not thank you for the compliment to my intelligence," answered Adolph, looking up at Grumkow reproachfully. "On the day the princess leaves the court, the wife of the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, you shall have the letter. Meantime you must trust me, but if you do not want to trust me,—well and good. Take your own course. I shall attend the little fête at which you are hanged with a great deal of joy, and in the evening, will celebrate the event with much beer—much."

Then Grumkow insisted that the letter should be delivered when the king's consent was obtained, but the Margrave laughed at him, and he was forced to be content with the promise our knight had given. The adroit Margrave had in truth shackled the devil.

When the Parliament was seated, and after the Tabagians had smoked the first pipe, Grumkow rose. Addressing the king and the members, he urged in the name of domestic peace and national policy that the king's friends advise his Majesty to accede to the queen's

wishes, and to send a commission forthwith to Bayreuth, offering the hand of the Princess Wilhelmina to the Hereditary Prince. Grumkow's speech was the keynote, and other members of The Tabagie supported his proposition, while the king listened. Seckendorf favored the project, and when the little minister succeeded, after many futile efforts, in getting the floor, the good man said:

"I was loath, your Majesty, to obey your recent commands to officiate at the betrothal of the beautiful princess to that mountain of bestial and ungodly flesh, the Margrave of Schwedt, and I am truly glad—"

At this point in the little minister's speech, Adolph, who was standing behind him, touched him on the shoulder and said:

"The Margrave of Schwedt did what you would have left undone, you canting little hypocrite. He refused the hand of the princess because her heart did not go with it."

The little minister had not seen Adolph standing behind him, and the Margrave's words so startled him that he turned in terror, fearing that he might suffer the fate of Weissenfels. He stared blankly for a moment, and then sat down without uttering another word. Adolph was becoming a terror.

Since the eventful day of the interrupted betrothal, Adolph had risen hour by hour in the opinion of all who knew him, and when he checked the little minister in his uncalled-for attack, the members of the Parliament applauded with loud acclaim: "Bravo, Schwedt!" "Bold Margrave!" "*Vive le Schwedt!*" and Adolph swelled mightily in the chest.

After a moment's silence, he bowed and said in answer to the plaudits of his friends:

"I thank you—much."

CHAPTER XX

THE STRANGE MAN FROM SCHWEDT

No definite action was taken that night at The Tabagie, though Grumkow tried very hard to bring it about. There could be no doubt about his sincerity; he was intensely in earnest. Perhaps his deep anxiety was part of the cause of his failure. But King Frederick William was stubborn and did not speak three words during the entire session. The meeting was broken up early, and, in a surly mood, the king went to the queen's boudoir.

The next day was eventless, as far as the Margrave and Grumkow knew. During the afternoon of the second day, Grumkow, who had been diligently seeking Adolph, found him at *Zur Groszen Wurst*, and begged for an extension of time. The Margrave, who was comfortably drunk, replied sternly:

"Not another hour. This day at six o'clock the curtain falls on the career of Baron Grumkow unless by that time the king's consent to the marriage has been given."

Grumkow begged and argued for nearly an hour, during which time the Margrave was

growing more drowsy every moment. The persistent baron did not cease his importunities, but pleaded until he saw that the clock had struck three for the worthy potentate of Schwedt, and that Adolph was asleep. Grumkow tried to arouse him, but failed.

No one else was in the room, so first making sure that the Margrave could not be aroused, Grumkow locked the door and stood for a moment watching the fallen hero. Murder was the thing he longed to do, but recalling Adolph's warning, he felt sure that the letter and the evidence against him would at once be placed before the king if harm befell the sleeping man.

While watching the Margrave, Grumkow conceived the happy thought that the troublesome letter might be on his enemy's person, so he determined to investigate. In one of the Margrave's pockets, Grumkow found three penknives; in another pocket were several affectionate letters from the Margravine, some of which seemed, to the baron's excited imagination, to confirm all that Adolph had said about the letter and the supporting evidence. He also found Wilhelmina's note to Fritz Henry. It was in a little pocket over Adolph's heart. In another pocket he found an apple and a few dried figs, and last, but not least, in a deep

pocket of the Margrave's coat tail, the prime minister of Frederick William found two huge, treasonable looking link of sausage. Disgusted and disappointed, Grumkow threw the sausage to the floor, left the Margrave and set out to find the king, whom he had failed to see during the day.

When Grumkow found his Majesty, he at once broached the subject nearest his heart, and begged the king to give his consent to the Bayreuth marriage.

"I sent Braum, Grote and Meyer to Bayreuth early yesterday morning to arrange the treaty with the Margrave," said the king. "It isn't necessary to make the fact public till we know the result of the embassy."

Grumkow breathed a sigh of relief, and wished most heartily that the Margrave of Schwedt were sober. He hurried back to *Zur Grossen Wurst* and took his place beside Adolph, determined to impart the glad intelligence just as soon as the Margrave was able to receive it.

The happy moment did not come until near the hour of eight, and Grumkow could almost feel the headsman's axe against his neck. When the Margrave's drowsy eyes began to open, the baron felt like dancing for joy.

"Is it too late? Is it too late?" he asked. "Is the person holding the letter going to the king? It is now eight o'clock. Is it too late? My dear, sweet Margrave, is it too late?"

Considerable time was required by the Margrave in opening his eyes and his mind. His mouth was opened many time in cavernous yawns, but it seemed to the baron that intelligence would never return to his despised enemy. At length the Margrave became receptive, and answered the baron's oft-repeated question by asking another:

"Has the king consented?"

"Yes," eagerly returned Grumkow. "An embassy started for Bayreuth yesterday morning to arrange the treaty, but I did not learn of it until this evening. Is it too late?"

On hearing the baron's news, light came to the Margrave's mind in a great flood, and instantly he was wide awake. He rose slowly to his feet, pressed his hand over his heart, and murmured as if in prayer:

"*Du lieber Gott!* Help me; help me!" In a moment he turned to Grumkow, saying: "If what you have told me is true, it is not too late; at least, I think it is not too late. I feel sure I shall be able to communicate with my friend, and if I can—"

"Waste not a moment! Go, go, my dear Margrave, my sweet Margrave, go!" said Grumkow, almost beside himself with fear. "I have the king's word. The embassy has gone to Bayreuth and the marriage shall be celebrated. I swear it! Before God, I swear it shall be celebrated!"

"In that case, I am sure it is not too late," sighed Adolph. "I'll go at once, but if you try to follow me, I go not a step."

"In God's name, go!" cried Grumkow. "I will remain here."

In stooping to the floor to take up his hat, the Margrave noticed two large links of sausage lying beside his chair. He stared vacantly at them for a moment, felt his coat pockets, and turned to Grumkow, saying drowsily, reproachfully, contemptuously:

"Did you find anything you wanted in my pockets?"

Grumkow protested, but Adolph, pointing to the sausage, insisted: "There is the evidence against you; you stole my sausage. I hope you don't think I am so great a fool as to get myself drunk with money in my pocket, when I am expecting Baron Grumkow to visit me. You found only a few pennies. Did you take them? Perhaps you expected to find the letter, but I

can hardly believe that you would pay me the poor compliment of supposing that I would keep the letter about me where you could steal it."

Grumkow would have enjoyed murdering the Margrave, but he dared not, so he smiled, kept his anger well hidden in his heart, and said:

"I pray you, Margrave, go at once. That is a good fellow. Lose not a moment's time."

Adolph hurried to his room in the palace, rearranged his toilet, and sought the queen, who confirmed Grumkow's words. Then he went back to his room and went to bed.

While in the queen's parlor, Adolph had seen the Princess Wilhelmina, and she had graciously given him her hand to kiss. Her smile was to Adolph what the light of heaven is to a wandering soul, but leaving it was like going into outer darkness.

Amid all the Margrave's suffering, there was one gleam of joy, pure, sweet and genuine. It radiated from the ever luminous thought that she whom he loved would be happy, and that her happiness would all have come through him. But as usual with him nowadays, he lay moaning until sleep came to his relief, for the heart of a child throbbed in the breast of this strange man from Schwedt.

The next morning, very early, Adolph started

in a carriage—he could not ride horseback—for Spandau Castle to carry the glad news to Fritz Henry. Owing to the bad condition of the roads he did not reach Spandau till nightfall, when he sought out his friend and told him of the happiness in store for him. Henry could not leave the castle till morning, so the friends sat up all night, and the Margrave recited in detail the marvelous events of the past week. At first Henry thought that Adolph's mind had been touched by a gentle frenzy, but he was soon convinced that the honest fellow was speaking the truth, and his joy was so great that for a time it was almost benumbing.

The next day, Henry obtained leave of absence and started on horseback for Berlin, the Margrave following in a carriage. Henry was delayed on the road, and did not reach the palace until an hour before dark. He found Sonnsfeld and told her that affairs of the greatest importance made it necessary for him to see the princess as soon as possible. He supposed the Margrave had told Wilhelmina that he was the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, but he was not sure, so he intended to make certain by telling her himself. On reaching Berlin, he expected to tell her also that he was returning to Bayreuth to complete arrange-

ments for their marriage. He did not, however, intend to impart either piece of information to any one else.

He said to Kate: "I will go to the doorway at the foot of the stairs, and hope the princess will come to me at the earliest possible moment after dark."

Henry had been waiting perhaps half an hour when the princess came from the door and ran to his arms. Under such conditions, persons are apt to forget what they had most desired to say, and that is just what happened to Henry. After a few moments of incoherent ecstasy, he said:

"So the marriage is really arranged! It is almost too good to be true."

Wilhelmina was not prepared for such enthusiasm on Henry's part over her prospective marriage, but she supposed his joy was of a negative quality, growing out of the fact that she was not to marry August of Saxony. The Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth was so much the less of two evils that she supposed Henry rejoiced because of her escape from the greater. Still, his very evident happiness seemed an excess of joy and hurt her.

Henry continued his congratulations, mingled with fervid love, and forgot that perhaps the

princess did not know he was the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth. In the urgent press of more important matters, he failed to tell her, and she, taking alarm from approaching footsteps, hurriedly reëntered the palace without learning that interesting fact. Henry had also neglected telling her that he was going at once to Bayreuth, and the omissions did not occur to him until he saw his father nearly three days later.

Henry forgot another important matter, too, when he left Berlin that evening, accompanied by a private in the Grenadier Regiment, and taking with him two of the king's horses. He failed to ask the king's permission, but his forgetfulness was natural under the circumstances.

The day—six or seven months before—on which Henry was captured by Prussian recruiting officers might prove to be, after all, the luckiest of his life.

The ride from Berlin to Bayreuth was a hard one because of rains and intolerable roads, but Henry was happy and regretted only one fact —that he could not fly. He was anxious to reach Bayreuth before Frederick William's ambassadors left, but he failed by nearly a day.

The Margrave of Bayreuth was filled with joy and surprise when his son ran into the

castle and embraced him. Henry had already learned that the Prussian ambassadors had returned to Berlin.

"Ah, father, it is almost too good to be true," said Henry, holding his father at arm's length. "You will not believe my story. Sit here in the windowseat, and listen while I tell you."

The Margrave and his son took their seats in the window, and Henry began his story.

"After I left here I was captured by brigands, who turned out to be Frederick William's recruiting officers. I did not know who my captors were until I stopped at a tavern near Berlin and was told by the Margrave of Schwedt. When I reached Berlin, I was undecided what course to pursue until I saw the Princess Wilhelmina; then I fell in love with her at once, and of course, determined to remain. Strange as it may seem to you, and marvelous as it still is to me, she returned my love. We had no hope of ever belonging to each other; but I'll tell you the whole story when I have more time."

"Did you know of the king's intentions before you left Berlin?" asked the Margrave.

"Yes," returned Henry. "I learned it three days ago, and started for home at the earliest

possible moment after the embassy left Berlin. I had hoped to get here before they left."

"Why did not the king speak directly to you?" asked the father.

"Why? Because — because —" answered Henry, confusedly: "why, he didn't know who I was. I enlisted in the regiment under an assumed name, and no one at the court of Berlin knew that I was your son."

"Did the princess know who —"

Henry lifted his hand to interrupt his father: "Surely I am the greatest living fool," said he, dropping his words slowly, and pausing in amazement at his own stupidity. "I rode to Berlin from Spandau for the purpose of telling her, but when I saw her I was so insane with joy that I forgot my purpose in the rush of—of other things. What will she think?" After a long, meditative pause, he continued: "But the Margrave of Schwedt will have told her before this, and I need not worry over my neglect. What did you say to the ambassadors?"

"I accepted the king's offer upon the condition that I could find you. I told them I had heard nothing from you since you left home several months ago, but I assured them I should find you at once, and that the marriage should take place just as soon as possible after

your return. I knew you would gladly consent."

"Ah, father, you cannot know how gladly I do consent. She is the most beautiful, the purest, truest, gentlest girl on earth. I tell you, father, there is not her like this side of heaven."

"I believe a great deal of what you say is true," returned the Margrave, smiling.

"It is *all* true," insisted Henry, indignantly.

"I am sure it is," said the Margrave, "and I am glad that you think it is. But we are losing time. I must write a letter to the king, telling him you have returned, and accepting his offer unconditionally."

Henry was quite of his father's opinion. The letter was soon written and placed in the hands of a fleet messenger, who would have no difficulty in overtaking the ambassadors before they reached Berlin.

The ambassadors had expressed the king's desire that the betrothal should take place at once, even if the ceremony must be performed with a proxy for the Hereditary Prince. Therefore, the letter contained instructions to the Margrave's ambassador, who was returning with the Brandenburgers, to act as Henry's proxy in the betrothal ceremony if the king

desired it to take place before Henry's arrival at Berlin. The letter also stated that Henry would reach Berlin one week from the date of writing.

Grumkow was anxious to get possession of Adolph's dangerous letter, so when the ambassadors arrived at Berlin, he urged the king to hasten the nuptials. The protests of the queen and Wilhelmina were of no avail, and the day of the Hereditary Prince's expected arrival was set for the betrothal, to be followed a few days later by the marriage ceremony.

Captain Churchill's sudden departure without leave had created trouble in two quarters. The king's wrath knew no bounds. Death in a hundred forms was too good for such a traitorous villain. To desert his own post was bad enough, but to take with him one of his Majesty's tallest Grenadiers, Johann Yaupts, who stood six feet eight, was theft, robbery, treason —every crime in the calendar. It was worse than murder, and the villain should be hunted throughout all Europe, and crucified,—yes, by the devil, crucified.

Wilhelmina was sure that evil had befallen her lover, but at times a fear that he had proved faithless flashed across her mind, and brought an ache to her heart. The latter hypothesis

seemed to be strengthened by Henry's exhibition of joy over her prospective marriage.

Don't Care explained the handsome captain's desertion by intimating that he had pressed his suit on her to a point where she had grown tired of his importunity, and that he had run away in despair. That theory of the case did not appeal to Wilhelmina and it disgusted Sonnsfeld. In truth, Mina's faith in Henry always triumphed and drove doubt from her heart, leaving her with the cold fear that an untoward fate had befallen her lover. She tried to see the Margrave, but he and his mother had left the court to visit a friend living a few miles from Berlin, whose beer was so good that it was famous throughout all Brandenburg.

Poor Adolph, despite the fact that the beer was good, told his mother that the days spent away from Berlin were days of grief and sorrow, yearning and pain.

"*Ach, Mutter liebling,* why did you not leave me at Schwedt? I was happy there, but now I shall never know a joyful moment in all the days of my life. I believed you when you said she would grow to love me, and after we reached Berlin, I believed you when you told me that you knew from her kindness she was learning the sweet lesson. I believed you, though I

knew in my heart you were wrong. I believed you because I longed to believe, but I was a fool. You remember that day at Schwedt you told me I was a fool? Good! You were right."

"Don't upbraid me, *liebling,*" pleaded the loving old mother; "I thought I was right, and God knows I have no wish in all my heart save a longing, a yearning, a bleeding for your happiness. *Ach,* my dear son, you are all in the world to me. Don't hate me, or I'll die—I'll die!"

"Mother, mother!" cried the Margrave, hurrying to her chair and kneeling by her side. "I do not upbraid you. I could not hate you. You are all that I have on earth. I love you, my mother, oh, I love you, and if it were not for you, *I* should want to die."

He wound his arm about her neck, rested his head on her loving breast, and lifting her hand to his lips, kissed her fingers affectionately.

She stroked his hair, saying, "Do not grieve; do not grieve, or you will break my heart."

"I will not grieve," answered the Margrave, kissing his mother, rising to his feet, and whistling to hide his pain, because it pained her.

Two o'clock of the day the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth was expected to arrive was set for

the betrothal ceremony. Gloom and sadness pervaded the entire court, for it was known to all that Wilhelmina was grieving because she was to be forced to plight her troth to a man she had never seen, and of whom she had heard none but unfavorable accounts. The queen was almost heartbroken, because the coming betrothal was the death-knell to her hopes of an English marriage.

The Hereditary Prince had been expected to arrive in the morning, but his failure to appear did not stop preparations for the betrothal ceremony. In case he did not arrive, the special envoy from Bayreuth would act as his proxy.

Again the Mirrored Chamber was crowded with the nobility of Brandenburg, awaiting the betrothal of the Princess Wilhelmina. The hour for the ceremony arrived. The king, the queen, the Crown Prince and Don't Care were ranged as on the former occasion. The brilliantly dressed audience stood in silence. Still the Hereditary Prince did not arrive.

A few minutes before two o'clock, the king began to show signs of irritation.

"Let the ceremony proceed with the proxy," ordered his Majesty. "The roads are so bad that our fine gentleman may have stuck in the

mud. Doubtless he has tried to come like a woman, in a carriage, and has been unable to get through on time. Let the ceremony proceed, I say. Go on!"

As on the former occasion, the princess came down the aisle, but this time she was walking in the dark to plight her troth to a man she had never seen. She at least knew the worst that could befall her when she had expected to marry the Margrave of Schwedt, but now it was like plunging into an abyss, and she was almost dumb with fear and grief.

Henry might have saved the princess this pain by telling her that he was the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, but perhaps it was well that he did not, for had she betrayed her happiness, the king and the queen might have changed their minds, or Don't Care might have concluded to take back her prince, and all would have been lost. There seemed to be a belief on the part of Mina's parents that the gratification of her desires, under any circumstances, would be an injury to her, an affront to their dignity, and a blow to parental authority in general.

The side door opened and the unhappy princess was moving down the aisle on the arm of the prince's proxy, when the front door opened,

and Fritz Henry—who had stopped at a tavern to make a hasty change of clothing—entered, clad in the gorgeous uniform of his father's court.

Some one announced: "The Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth!"

At once there came from all parts of the room the cry: "The Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth! His Highness has arrived!"

Wilhelmina and the proxy bridegroom reached the open space in front of the king just as the cry resounded through the hall. Those who saw Henry and recognized him began to murmur their delight, for he was liked at court, and a whisper of the love between him and the princess had in some manner got abroad. He hurried to the front, knelt before their Majesties, and said:

"I almost killed my horses trying to get here on time, but I am here, though a little late, and make my homage to your gracious Majesties."

Don't Care looked at Henry in astonishment, quickly turning to disgust, but did not speak.

"What does this mean?" demanded the king, rising angrily and approaching Henry in a threatening manner. His Majesty had not fully understood the announcement of the Prince's arrival; at least, he had not connected him with

his deserting captain now kneeling before the dais.

The king shook his fist in Henry's face, exclaiming angrily: "You deserted from my regiment, and you took one of my tallest troopers. You stole two of my horses, and now you come back and apologize for being late. What does it mean? Answer me!"

"I have brought back your trooper and your horses," returned Henry, "and I have also brought, as a present from my father, ten men, two of whom are taller than Johann Yaupts. These troopers all have better horses than those I took away, and I have returned to enlist, first in the service of the princess, and after her, in the service of your Majesties for life."

With this he turned to Wilhelmina, whose surprise had almost deprived her of the power of thought, and taking her hand, lifted it to his lips.

"Explain!" cried the king, half in anger, half in doubt. "What does this mean? Who are you?"

"He is the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth!" cried Adolph of Schwedt, elbowing his way through the crowd, and bowing before the king. "Yes, he is Henry, the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth. I present him to your Majesties."

Then turning to the assembled company, he shouted: "*Vive le Bayreuth! Vive le Bayreuth!*"

At once the refrain was taken up, and the happy cry resounded through the room for several minutes.

When silence reigned again, Henry said to the king: "I supposed your Majesty knew who I was. I felt sure the Margrave of Schwedt had told you. In my happiness I forgot to do so when I left. The Margrave is right. I am the Hereditary Prince of Bayreuth."

The king looked at Henry for a moment, and turning to his chair sat down, as a shout of joy sprang from the assembled company, like the tones of a single mighty voice.

When all was quiet again, the king, still groping about in the haze of surprise, seemed able to catch sure hold of but one fact, and to it he gave utterance:

"*Ach, Gott,* he isn't afraid of the devil!"

His Majesty, still groping in the mist, soon caught another fact, and it at once became articulate. He spoke in a whisper to the little minister—he of The Tabagie—saying:

"Go on with the ceremony, you fool! Go through with it quickly. I want to see the new recruits!"

So these twain, who loved, were betrothed, and in their joy, forgot all about the friend who had made their happiness possible. Surely the history of the world shows no more unselfish love than that which dwelt in the heart of Johann Adolph, Margrave of Schwedt and Knight of Brandenburg.

And now the story is nearly told.

Don't Care avoided Henry for several days after the ceremony, but at last came up to him, and said:

"So he's tall and thin, and his eye rolls, and he is pious? Bah! I don't care. Wilhelmina is welcome to you. It is all true and more. I don't care."

When invitations were sent out for the marriage ceremony, the princess and Henry wrote a joint letter to the Margrave, who had returned to his mother and the good beer in the country, inviting him to be the guest of honor during the marriage festivities. He replied in a joyous letter, and returned at once to the palace, where he seemed to be the happiest of a very happy throng. He would not mar Wilhelmina's happiness by allowing her to think that he was miserable, and succeeded so well in deceiving her that one evening she said to Henry:

"I am glad our friend, the Margrave, has forgotten what he thought was his love for me."

"I, too, am glad," answered Henry, though he was not so sure that the Margrave had forgotten.

At length the wedding day came. The ceremony was performed and the wedding breakfast was eaten amid great joy, with the Margrave as the central figure at the royal table. Ah, it was a rare day for Adolph! He was the hero of the occasion and far outshone the bridegroom.

When the bride and the bridegroom separated to prepare for the journey to Bayreuth, the princess whispered to the Margrave:

"We shall expect to see you at the carriage, and saving my mother, you shall have the last farewell. But now I give you this miniature of myself as a token of my gratitude and love."

The Margrave hurried to his room—the old garret he had formerly occupied—and seated himself at the window. Leaning his elbows on the window bench, he sat gazing down on the garden. With aching heart he watched the marble steps in front of the great doors, from which the carriage would soon depart, bearing away from him forever the woman he loved.

There he sat through two long hours, hardly conscious that time was passing, so slowly did

the minutes drag. Wilhelmina's miniature was in his hand and frequently was on his lips, but he gazed down ever at the great doors, hardly knowing that he suffered, so great was his pain.

At length the carriage drove to the marble steps; the great doors opened and the princess came forth, radiant with joy that Adolph had purchased for her at a cost to him of more than life itself.

"Where is the Margrave of Schwedt?" she asked.

"He is not here," answered Sonnsfeld.

"Fetch him! Fetch him!" cried the princess. "I cannot leave without saying farewell to him."

Messengers were sent out, but he could not be found, so the princess drove off, happy as the birds at dawn, without saying good-bye to poor, broken-hearted Adolph. He had not dared trust himself to say farewell, but watched her through streaming tears, as the postillion cracked his whip and bore her out of his life forever.

"*Ach, Gott! Ach, Gott!*" he cried from the depths of his anguish; then as the carriage drew out of sight his head fell forward on his bended elbows, and he sobbed till his troubles were over, for Adolph's heart was broken; the Margrave of Schwedt was dead.

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